



THE INDEPENDENT

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WEATHER: some rain and sunshine

(IR45p) 40p



COMMENT

SPANISH
IT'S THE TALK
OF NEW YORK



THE TABLOID

AND AN EASTER BUNNY
CALLED DERMOT



THE TABLOID

THE HIGH STREET
BURSTS INTO BLOOM

Wanted: a decent, angry champion

Anthony Bevins
Jojo Moyes
and Fran Abrams

The hunt was on for an "anti-sleaze" candidate for Janon last night, as both Neil Hamilton's Conservative association and John Major made clear that they would not move against him, and the Liberal Democrats agreed to make common cause with Labour in the blue chip Cheshire constituency.

Lord Holme, the Liberal Democrats' campaign manager, said local activists in Tatton were seeking out a "credible, independent anti-corruption candidate", following Labour's decision to stand aside in favour of a soon-party challenger for Mr Hamilton.

The threat was given added impetus yesterday by the Prime Minister's claim that he would not, and could not, act against Mr Hamilton, and the local party's support for the beleaguered candidate.

Alan Barnes, the Tory association's chairman, said he welcomed Mr Major's "belief, in principle, that people against whom allegations are made are innocent until proven guilty".

A growing list of people who might be considered as anti-corruption candidates being bounced around Westminster included Virgin boss Richard Branson, Frances Lawrence, widow of murdered headmaster Philip Lawrence, business guru and author Charles Handy and Lady Elspeth Howe, wife of Lord Howe and chair of Opportunity 2000, which seeks more women in business.

Defiantly using the first daily press conference of the four-week election campaign to field questions about Mr Hamilton and sleaze - in a clear attempt to kill the issue once and for all - Mr Ashdown squarely attacked all suggestions that Mr Hamilton should have to stand down before any findings of guilt or innocence had been reached on the cash-for-questions allegations levelled against him.

"I am not going to bow to the witch-hunt mentality of saying that anybody who faces unsubstantiated charges must leave public life," Mr Major said.

But he also gave the strongest possible hint that he was unhappy with the ability of local party associations to stand up to the party leadership - and refuse to dump candidates who were embarrassing the national party, and impeding its campaign.

"They have to work with a candidate, they have to support him or her in their campaigns



That's the way to do it - the Paddy and Judy Show outside the Liberal Democrat conference at Church House, Westminster, yesterday. Photograph: John Voos

Ashdown sets out vision of a puppet regime

Barrie Clement

Does Paddy Ashdown see himself as a string of sausages? Or perhaps he would prefer the role of crocodile? If not, a policeman, perhaps?

Mr Ashdown yesterday became the object of the most serious galling faced by a politician in the election campaign so far.

The inquisition - masterminded by heavyweight television journalist Vincent Hanna, was prompted by the Liberal Democrat leader's characterisation of the fractious Blair

and beyond, and it has always been their position," he said.

But he then added: "We may have to look at that at a later stage in the events of the 1990s. But that's a matter to be considered not in the hot blood of the last few days, but a coolly considered matter after the general election."

Mr Hamilton, who remained inside his rectory home yesterday, was not saying anything about the future that was dominating the first full day of election campaigning.

and Major on Punch and Judy. Mr Ashdown predictably saw himself as the policeman, which left open the question of which political figures would be given the part as the disreputable reptile and the even more demanding role of the string of sausages.

It is a game one could usefully play to while away the month until the election. And while we are on the subject of puppets, who do you think was responsible for introducing this clever and colourful metaphor to the hustings?

Lord Holme said the Liberal Democrat candidate, Roger Barclay, was still in place, and there was no question of him standing down until a suitable person had been found.

Mr Barclay and the Labour candidate, Jon Kelly, will both remain in place as prospective candidates until 8 April, when the Tatton Conservatives will make a final decision on whether to adopt Mr Hamilton as official candidate.

Gordon Brown, the Shadow Chancellor, said Mr Major had

The Liberal Democrat spin doctors claim authority. They neglect the fact, however, that it was your reporter who came up with the idea. On hearing it, Nicholas South, Mr Ashdown's head of press and policy, said: "Punch and Judy eh? That's a good idea. I'll nick that."

Yesterday, however, Mr South was putting an entirely different spin on things. "We had prepared the Punch and Judy show for the press conference before you used the phrase. I had my tongue in my cheek when I said I'd nick it."

It is now clear that after a weekend in which senior Tories called for Mr Hamilton to stand down, reportedly at the behest of Mr Major, the Prime Minister is now putting the whole authority of his leadership behind backing the endorsement of Mr Hamilton as a candidate at the election.

"Mr Hamilton does not deserve to be re-elected. We are agreed with many Conservative supporters that he should not stand."

■ The Conservatives are gain-

The party yesterday unveiled a poster urging "End the Punch and Judy show" which Lord Holme, the party's campaign manager, said it had been the idea of the "creative group within the party".

Questions remain. Who will be the electoral crocodile? Who might fulfil the role of a string of political sausages? Mr Ashdown, when asked, said: "Goodness knows who would play the string of sausages and in the absence of Norman Tebbit there isn't a natural crocodile around is there?"

ing on Labour, according to a newspaper opinion poll published today. The Guardian/ICM poll shows Labour on 46 points, down two from last month, the Conservatives on 32, up two, and the Liberal Democrats on 17, up one. However, 81 per cent of voters questioned said they believed MPs accused of taking cash for questions should resign, while only 14 per cent said they should stay. The pollsters questioned 1,200 people over Easter weekend.

Us, you and this carnival of democracy

THE INDEPENDENT
election '97

No more waiting: as of this morning we are immersed in a full-scale campaign, with every national politician engaged in a struggle to harvest millions of uncommitted votes. It happens rarely but for the next few weeks, THEY are coming to us for the answer.

We should enjoy that; we should take it seriously. Whatever the polls say, nothing is yet decided. Getting here has at times seemed an endless slog through squelching sleazebits. Already, we have been sold outrageously implausible promises and threats. Already, we have had our intelligences assaulted by the spin-doctors and our patience tried by the ad-men.

And all of this has had, already, its inevitable result. Willie Whitelaw, Margaret Thatcher's right-hand man, had a fine phrase against electioneering: he was not prepared to "go about the country stirring up apathy". Well, if the national mood seems a little sceptical about the election, and even apathetic just now, that is hardly surprising. It is a weariness that the political elite has worked for years to foster.

But if scepticism is reasonable, cynicism is not. The issues before voters now include the future of our national politics and our currency, as well as the more familiar and difficult challenges - to maintain and fund a good state health service; to improve our often grossly inadequate schools; to stop unemployment turning parts of Britain into alien and miserable bandit ghettos.

The parties' policies are NOT all the same. Nor are the leading politicians: they think differently, fear different things and hope for different futures. Some are thoroughly decent, public-spirited people. Others are fools, and a few are rogues. We have, in short, real choices.

Historically, and still glob-

ally, we are privileged people. We ought to be at least a little engaged, to feel the odd tremor of excitement, at the democratic carnival now underway. And if we shrug, and turn away - like Swampy - then we are failing too. Democracies need informed, articulate, arguing citizens, even before they need leaders and parties.

So the first role of the press is to bring readers the facts, and set them fairly in context - to cut through the hyperbole and the statistical smears, and to help readers make honest choices, founded on reason, not prejudice. Day in, day out. The Independent will be doing its collective best. You have trusted us to do it for a long time. We won't let you down.

Beyond that, we will be bringing you intelligently conducted polls; reportage, gossip and wit from all across the country; daily information on lies and half-truths; advice on tactical voting... everything, in short, that you need to follow and enjoy the election. Enough, I hope - but no more. We won't forget the other news and we won't drown you in grey columns of blather.

We have - my prejudice - the best team of writers, photographers and editors for this campaign that we have ever had. The political team led by Tony Bevins is better than it was when I worked for it. The columnists are the best and most varied in the paper's history.

We are all biased. But this is one newspaper whose central bias is towards reason and fairness, not a single party manifesto.

Andrew Marr

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QUICKLY

Bombers killed

Palestinian suicide bombers struck twice in the Gaza Strip yesterday, but killed themselves not the Jewish children whose school buses they appeared to be targeting. The attacks came as violence erupted in the West Bank in which two Palestinians were killed.

Page 12

Ambulance call times

A new ambulance priority response system, designed to save more than 3,200 lives a year, was introduced on a pilot basis by four ambulance services yesterday. The aim is to reduce the response time for urgent calls to eight minutes.

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Wall Street crisis

The fear of rising interest rates on both sides of the Atlantic caused Wall Street to produce its worst two-day performance since 1987.

Page 20

Forsyth tries to stop meltdown

Stephen Goodwin

With Scots Tories tearing their own flesh like wounded beasts, Michael Forsyth, Secretary of State for Scotland, attempted the impossible yesterday when he tried to focus attention on jobs and the economy.

A (too) coincidental announcement by Mr Forsyth that First Direct, the telephone bank, is to create as many as 5,000 jobs in Lanarkshire could not obscure the fact that the Conservatives are facing meltdown in Scotland.

A faction within the party is being blamed for the weekend resignation of Sir Michael Hirst, the party chairman, over past homosexual friendship. Sir

Michael had been "pushed" by senior officials although it was doubtful that newspapers had sufficient evidence to nail him, one insider said yesterday.

The infigthing was all but confirmed by Annabel Goldie, who has succeeded Sir Michael at the helm of the founding Tory ship, when she said the party had its "malcontents". Caveats that all parties had dissidents had little impact.

While John Major, at his London press conference, was ready to tackle sleaze questions head on, Mr Forsyth and his colleagues were more reluctant - even though they had the same need to clear the issue away before today's manifesto is launched.

Miss Goldie, repeatedly trying to close down questions about Sir Michael's resignation and the shambles in the Scottish party, snapped after 40 minutes: "I'm simply not prepared to entertain any more questions on this."

Mr Forsyth wryly admitted that the campaign had not got off to an ideal start. "I could have planned it better," he said, adding that Sir Michael's departure was a "setback".

The resignation means Mr Forsyth will have even less time for nursing his highly marginal seat of Stirling. Labour needs a swing of only 0.6 per cent to depose the Secretary of State. With continuing disarray, the odds are stacking up against Lan-

Lang, President of the Board of Trade, in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale, and possibly Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, in Edinburgh Pentlands.

The Tories hold only 10 out of 72 seats in Scotland. Fear of losing more gave way to panic following the resignations of Sir Michael and Allan Stewart, the former Scottish Office minister, after reports of a relationship with a married woman.

Sir Michael was the front-runner to succeed Mr Stewart as the candidate for Eastwood - the safest Tory seat in Scotland. But according to a Conservative source, his ambitions were thwarted by "enemies" who began spreading rumours about his past. "It went horri-

bly wrong," said the source. Instead, the favourite to defend the safe seat is Paul Cullen QC, the Solicitor General for Scotland. An ambitious newcomer to party politics, the 40-year Edinburgh lawyer was expected to be selected at a private meeting late last night.

A middle-class dormitory to the south of Glasgow, Eastwood was held by Allan Stewart in 1992 with a majority of 11,688. Mr Forsyth yesterday denied he had deliberately kept a low profile as the Stewart and Hirst saga unfolded. He had been occupied last week with a Cabinet meeting at which the report on food poisoning deaths was discussed and finishing off the Scottish manifesto.

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news

significant shorts

IRA blamed for arson attack on Orange leader's home

IRA supporters were accused last night of attempting to force Protestant families to flee after a series of arson attacks on houses and property in east Tyrone.

The home of Joel Patton, leader of a hardline Orange Order group opposed to compromise on the re-routing of loyalist parades away from nationalist areas in Northern Ireland, was one of three homes where flammable liquid was poured through letter boxes.

Mr Patton's attackers dropped unlit matches and ran off when he challenged them, but two other houses in Dungannon, Co Tyrone, were set on fire. In nearby Newmills, gas cylinders were thrown through the windows of a Post Office. Poppy wreaths were seized from the village war memorial and used to try to set fire to a nearby shop.

Last night, Mr Patton, 47, said: "This was a clearly orchestrated campaign to drive Protestants out of the community."

Green light for Dorset's prison ship

Plans to moor a floating prison off the south coast were yesterday given the go-ahead by Environment Secretary John Gummer.

The Department of the Environment said Mr Gummer had given clearance for the development of the onshore facilities at the Dorset port associated with the ship, HMP Weare.

The Prison Service had appealed to Mr Gummer against Weymouth and Portland Council's refusal to grant planning permission for the facilities. The council argued that the ship, intended to house around 480 low-risk inmates on a temporary basis, would spoil views of the harbour, destroy the area's reputation as a tourist resort and deter new industry.

Boy, 12, impaled on kitchen knife

A 12-year-old boy died after falling on to a knife sticking out of a dishwasher at his home, police said yesterday.

Mark Rockingham, of Kettering, Northants, severed an artery when the knife punctured his chest, said a police spokeswoman. The accident happened on Sunday and he was taken to a local hospital, where he died later that night.

Soccer hero's warning over alcohol



Soccer hero Malcolm Macdonald hopes his plight will warn others of drink dangers, a court heard yesterday.

The "shamed and humiliated" former Newcastle United and England striker (left), who admitted a drink-driving offence last month, was placed on probation for 18 months and banned from driving for two years.

John Wesenraft, for the defence, told magistrates in Newcastle that "Supermac", as he was known, said alcohol had worsened the effect of osteoporosis that developed from the knee injuries which ended his career 18 years ago. Attempts to kill the pain by drinking whisky had been what started his alcohol problem.

Macdonald, 47, of Jesmond, in Newcastle, was stopped by police in February. Alcohol from the night before was detected on his breath, showing him to be three times over the limit.

Children narrowly avoid track death

Railtrack yesterday reported a "near miss" only yards from where two boys were killed by a train less than 48 hours ago.

The driver of a train travelling at about 70mph reported about 10 children running on the line - including a girl as young as five. The incident occurred less than 24 hours after two teenagers, Ricky Smith, 15, and Mark Ashcroft, 13, were killed on the track near Halton Moor in Leeds. A spokesman for Railtrack said of the latest incident: "It's quite staggering that this could happen."

Psychiatric report on drink-driver

An ambulance man convicted of drink-driving is to undergo a psychiatric examination before magistrates decide whether to send him to prison. Bernard Edwards, 31, pleaded guilty to drink-driving after crashing his ambulance into a car at Trefnant, near Denbigh, in North Wales, as he rushed a heart-attack victim to hospital at midnight on 31 January.

Denbigh magistrates agreed to adjourn the case until 14 April after Rachel Silverbeck, for the defence, said she was concerned about his mental health and requested a psychiatric report.

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people



Royal scuffle: The princess watches as Kevin Duggan steps in (Photograph: Kelvin Bruce)

The Princess, the snapper and the man in the street

Diana, Princess of Wales last night issued a plea for privacy as a row brewed over her role in a street scuffle between a paparazzo photographer and a passer-by described as a "hotel tout".

The incident took place on Monday morning outside a west London gym when the Princess asked a passer-by, Kevin Duggan, to stop a photographer taking pictures of her. Mr Duggan allegedly pinned the award-winning photographer, Brendan Beane, to a wall and took his camera, seizing his film.

In a statement from her office, the princess said she welcomed stronger legal powers to put an end to "harassment" from photographers who followed her during her daily routine.

"Once again the Princess of Wales has been harassed by a photographer," the statement read.

"Once again this has become the subject of inaccurate and sensational headlines. The princess hopes that the recent passage of the Privacy and Harassment Act will give greater protection to people such as herself who are the victims of this kind of distressing intrusion into their private lives. The Princess has become increasingly critical of photographers' conduct and has in the past been reduced to tears by their activities."

Kevin Duggan, who works as a "hotel tout" for budget backpackers boarding houses in the bustling Earls Court area, stepped in when he saw a photographer taking pictures of the princess after he snapped her outside the gym club.

According to yesterday's Sun, the princess told Mr Duggan to "get the film". The newspaper printed a picture of the princess asking Mr Duggan for help and handing him by the wrist a 28-year-old pinned the photographer to a wall and took his film.

Scotland Yard confirmed the confrontation took place. A spokeswoman said: "Police are aware of a minor incident in the Earls Court Road area involving a member of the Royal Family. This matter has not been formally reported and no formal complaint has been received."

Mr Beane, 39, said: "I am stunned she did not step in and stop it. It was outrageous. She was not a star or a threat. I have taken photographs of her for 10 years."

A family friend near Mr Duggan's home in Co Armagh said: "Kevin would definitely be the kind of man who would help out a woman in distress. He's been very well brought up and is a lovely lad."

Matthew Grace

Moll nominated for best actress in Baftas

Alex Kingston, who starred in ITV's raunchy adaptation of Moll Flanders, was last night shortlisted as best actress in nominations for the 1997 Bafta awards - known as the "British Oscars". She will face stiff competition from Gina McKee, whose performance in the BBC's acclaimed *Our Friends in the North* was among seven nominations for the £3.5m series.

Indeed, the nine-part drama, which charts the troubled lives and loves of four Georgian friends from 1694 to 1695, was shortlisted for awards including best actors (Chris Eccleston and Peter Vaughan), and top drama.

Ruby Wax Meetings, in which Wax interviewed Sarah, the Duchess of York, donned a false beard with Sharon Stone and discussed Pamela Anderson's favourite sex positions, is in contention for the light entertainment trophy.

And BBC2's adaptation of Iain Banks's novel, *The Crow Road*, has four Bafta nominations, including best drama serial.

Man Behaving Badly star Martin



Clunes is nominated for best comedy performance, alongside David Jason and Nicholas Lyndhurst for the *Only Fools and Horses*.

ITV's controversial documentary drama *Hillsborough* is nominated alongside *Crossing the Floor*, *The Precious Blood* and *Some Kind of Life* in the single drama category.

David Furnish's war-and-all study of Elton John, *Tantrums and Tiaras*, is a strong contender in the documentaries, against *Remember Aberfan*, *Cutting Edge's The Home* and *Horizon's Fermat's Last Theorem*.

The awards are presented on 29 April.

Blind man gives his eye teeth to see again

A blind grandfather from north London has had his sight restored by a pioneering operation in which one of his teeth was used to make him a new eye.

Bhimji Varsani, aged 62, from north Finchley, lost the sight in his right eye through an attack of smallpox as a child, and gradually lost the sight in his left eye, through trachoma, a chronic contagious eye disease.

Surgeons at the Sussex Eye Hospital have now restored the sight in one eye, by making a miniature magnifying glass from one of Mr Varsani's eye teeth and a piece of jaw bone, which was then inserted into his eyeball in a delicate seven-hour operation to replace his damaged cornea.

The two-stage procedure is known as osteo-odontal keratoprosthesis and costs about £7,000 to perform.

Mr Varsani said: "I can't believe it. It is magic. I haven't seen anything for nearly two years - my grandchildren look so much bigger now."

Annabel Ferriman

briefing

SOCIETY

Marriage breakdown hits women harder than men

Breakdowns in marriage can lead to depression in women, but not in men, according to new research. But when men get depressed they see their relationship as deteriorating, whereas the same is not true for women.

Psychologists at Cardiff University and American universities interviewed 150 newly-weds and returned to them 18 months later. The full results are due to be published in the journal *Psychological Science* later this summer.

Professor Frank Fincham, who carried out the research amongst American couples, said: "Depression in a man is not likely to be a symptom of marital stress but it may lead to marital problems. Marital problems are likely to cause depression in women."

"The sample finding was very clear cut," he added. "From our research it seems women value relationships more than men do and that means that if something important to you is not working it can be pretty depressing. Men did not put the same degree of value on relationships."

Glenda Cooper

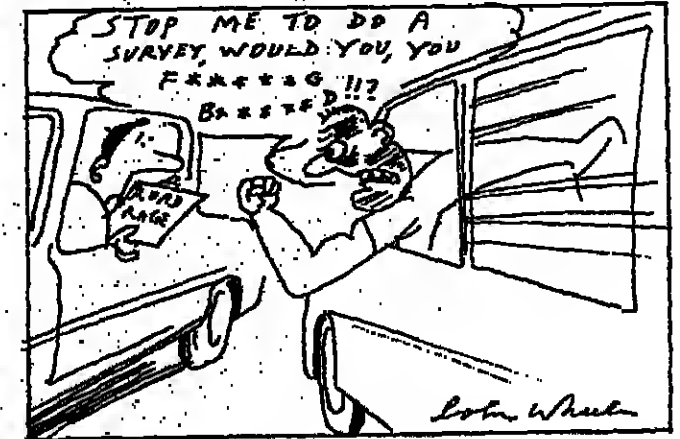
MOTORING

Road rage becoming commonplace

Nearly half of motorists have been victims of, or have witnessed, "road rage", according to a new survey conducted by the Cornhill insurance company. Of the more than 1,000 people surveyed, more than one in three men and one in four women said they had been victims of some act of aggression from a road user.

The most common form of aggression shown was verbal abuse, followed by hand gestures and intimidatory driving. Thirteen people taking part in the survey reported physical attacks and 24 said their vehicles had been attacked.

"This type of behaviour can cause accidents which need never have taken place, and inevitably leads to higher insurance costs," said Cornhill general manager, Denis Loretto. "Everyone using the public highway should be concerned at the scale and frequency of aggressive behaviour on our roads."



SHOPPING

Supermarkets score a hit with CDs

Leading supermarkets have cornered an estimated 15 per cent of the video, compact disc and cassette market, a report claimed yesterday. And it forecasts a share of 20 per cent by 2000 - although 25 per cent is not inconceivable.

Sales of videos, CDs and cassettes now exceed £400m in supermarkets, with the products stocked in a total of more than 1,100 stores across the country.

Corporate Intelligence on Retailing, which supplies information and analysis on the retail industry, pointed out that the major supermarkets, led by Tesco and Sainsbury, were aggressively cutting prices of music products. Retailers likely to be most hurt by the supermarkets are WH Smith and Boots, it added.

CIR believes specialists such as Our Price, which still operates from relatively small stores, could also suffer. But HMV, Virgin and Tower and independent retailers are catering for different customers and will be less affected if they can avoid being drawn into a price war, the report adds.

MEDICINE

New treatment could save 1,000

A new method of delivering anti-cancer drugs to patients after bowel cancer surgery might prevent about 1,000 deaths a year in the UK, the Imperial Cancer Research Fund says today.

The new approach, of feeding drugs directly into the liver, through a tube inserted during surgery (portal vein infusion), means that more of the drug reaches this gland than when drugs are delivered in the normal way - by mouth or injecting them into the bloodstream. Reaching the liver is essential because it is the most common site for recurrence of bowel cancer, which kills 18,000 people a year in the UK and is the second leading cause of cancer deaths.

Researchers at the charity's Cancer Studies Unit in Oxford carried out a review of data on 4,000 patients in 10 studies worldwide and found that portal vein infusion appeared to reduce deaths by 5 per cent. Professor Richard Peto, the unit's head, said: "PVI is an unusually convenient cancer treatment. It's given for just one week after surgery and has few major side-effects."

Portal Vein Chemotherapy for Colorectal Cancer, *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, 2 April, 1997.



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تحتفظ من الأصل

Why Britain (and Anna Ford) is swearing by the Grundys

Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

When *Today* programme presenter Anna Ford described Simon Pemberton, the ruthless landowner in the *Archers* radio soap, as a "shit" on air yesterday morning, there were at least four million listeners who must have agreed with her, even if her language came as something of a shock at 8.25 in the morning.

Some listeners have even crossed the boundary between fiction and reality and the BBC revealed yesterday that the fictional Mr Pemberton had received 20 pieces of hate mail, including a death threat, at the BBC's Pebble Mill studios.

Listeners will find out by the end of this week who wins the six-month long battle for Grange Farm after the soap's Agricultural Lands Tribunal met for the first time on air last night to consider the Grundys' case. Those knowledgeable in farming law believe whether or not Mr Pemberton really is a shit could affect the outcome.

Vaessa Whitburn, the programme's editor, is remaining tight-lipped about the outcome of the case, but said yesterday that her fictional tribunal will give a decision quicker than the real thing: "It goes on for a few more days, but it comes to a conclusion rather quicker than in real life to give listeners a bit of a breather. After all this has been going on since October."

Anna Ford denied yesterday that she was a big *Archers* fan and she apologised for her bad language.

Yet the chaotic farming family has garnered support from agriculture minister Angela Browning and the Princess of Wales' lawyer Anthony Julius, who offered free legal advice.

Even the Labour Party, which probably sees the Grundys as very old Labour, has come out against the thrusting Mr Pemberton.

In real life the 40 per cent of farmers who are tenants are some of the few well-protected workers left in Britain. The Agricultural Lands Tribunal was set

up by an Act of Parliament in 1947 to give farmers a right of appeal against landlords.

It met only 56 times last year, and saw only three cases relating to eviction. Unfortunately for the Grundys, all three cases were won by the landlords.

No one, it seems, wants to back Mr Pemberton. Even Oliver Harwood, spokesman for the County Landowners' Association, said yesterday that while Mr Pemberton was not necessarily a shit in farming terms - Pemberton is following CLA policy by turning disused farm buildings into business units to create rural jobs - the CLA isn't best pleased to be associated with a landowner who slapped around his ex-girlfriend Sheila Archer last year.

Mr Harwood believes the Grundys will keep their farm because there are two parts to the tribunal's deliberations. First, Mr Pemberton has to prove the Grundys are inefficient farmers; however the tribunal can still decide, in the words of the 1947 act: "To withhold the notice to quit if it seems to them that a fair and reasonable landlord would not insist on repossession."

If even *Today* presenters and government ministers are in agreement about Mr Pemberton, it would seem there is little chance of him being found "fair and reasonable."

If it sounds like the *Archers* is starting to engage dangerously with the real world it would not be the first time.

Michael Howard the Home Secretary was lobbied by listeners in 1993 when the character Susan Carter was jailed for six months for helping her brother while he was on the run from the Police. The most controversial plot twist was in 1995, when the soap's writers killed off its favourite matriarch, Doris Archer on the night that ITV first launched.

Vanessa Whitburn denied that the climax to the Grundy story was timed to compete with the launch of Channel 5. "They had the *Spice Girls* and got 2m viewers," she said. "We have an agricultural tribunal and get 4m listeners, which tells you something."

The story so far

The *Archers*, Britain's longest-running soap, started in 1951 as part of a propaganda effort to get farmers to grow more food. In recent years the editor, Vanessa Whitburn, has spiced up the traditionally staid storylines about lambing to include sex, drugs and organic yoghurt.

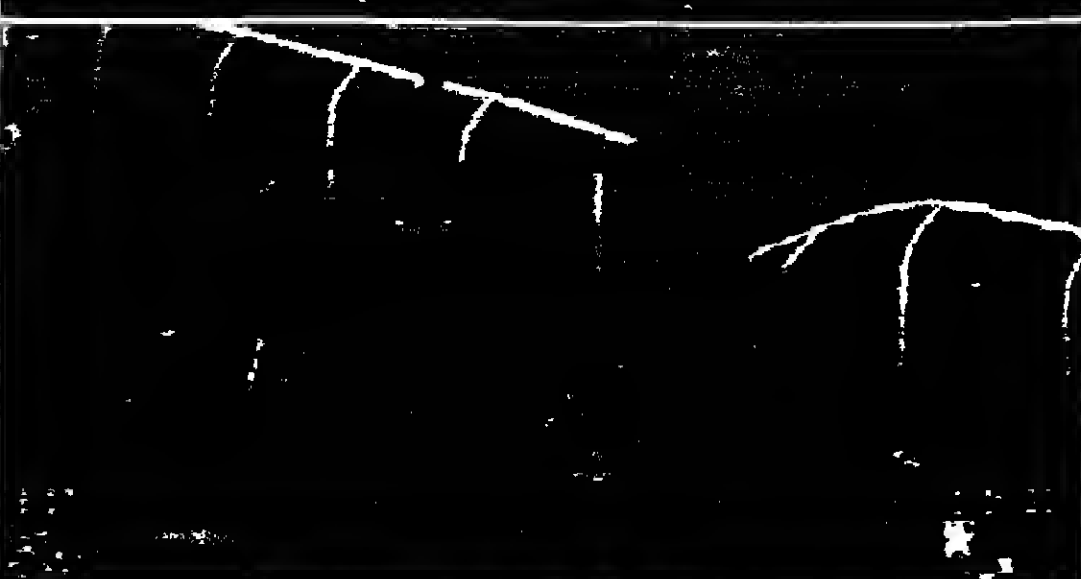
Ratings have increased by about 500,000 to 4 million, making it Radio 4's biggest programme after the *Today* programme.

Simon Pemberton, 37, is the manifestation of the new, racier *Archers* characters introduced by Ms Whitburn. He is described as the nastiest character to appear in the soap. He is son of the benign squire Guy Pemberton, who owned Ambridge's biggest estate.

Simon inherited the farm after pushing his father to a heart attack by constantly arguing with him.

Simon's father, Guy, was a well-known figure in the village. He was a member of the village council and a supporter of the local football team. He was also a member of the local church. Simon's mother, Mary, was a well-known figure in the village. She was a member of the village council and a supporter of the local football team. She was also a member of the local church. Simon's father, Guy, was a well-known figure in the village. He was a member of the village council and a supporter of the local football team. He was also a member of the local church. Simon's mother, Mary, was a well-known figure in the village. She was a member of the village council and a supporter of the local football team. She was also a member of the local church.

Formidable escape from a horse called Formidable



A racehorse, Formidable Flame, bucks and crashes through the barrier into the spectators' enclosure at Southwell Racecourse, Nottinghamshire, yesterday, after breaking free from its starting stall



The horse continues its rampage through the enclosure until calmed by the outstretched arm of a racegoer



The baby survives unhurt and is carried away by his relieved but shocked mother

Story that went round world on a fool's errand

Clare Garner

National media newsdesks spent the early hours of yesterday fielding phone calls from those who had fallen hook, line and sinker for their customary April Fool's Day stories. It was only later that they realised the joke was on them.

Unsuspecting news agencies who enquired about *The Independent's* front-page exclusive - "Thatcher lined up to be Blair's ambassador in Washington" - were referred to the baroness herself. Unfortunately Associated Press (AP) did not make its own checks and disseminated it as far afield as Australia.

Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) picked up the AP report and put out a radio news bulletin. A warning from ABC's London correspondent came too late. Mark Tamberlane, no stranger to Fleet Street spoofs, immediately warned his colleagues: "The British papers are renowned for pulling their readers' legs on April Fool's Day."

And so they did. Pets take

pictures which win prizes, if you believe everything you read in yesterday's *Daily Mail*. The paper printed an award-winning photograph of a gaping lion's jaw - "The most amazing picture you will ever see" - apparently taken by a chimpanzee, moments before death.

A do-it-yourself guide on teaching pets to use cameras and an invitation to send in successful snaps followed. A spokeswoman for the picture desk said last night that enquiries had been "coming in from all directions".

The BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme ran two spoofs: an animal psychologist's ability to interpret 300 canine words and a story about the "substantially reduced" jumps on the Grand National course. This year, in an effort to avoid accidents, Becher's Brook would be just under 4ft tall "which will enable most horses to clear it easily". The infamous Chair Jump at Aintree had been redesigned with a see-through screen to give it a "modern feel".

The *Guardian* began a series on constituencies with a look at one of Scotland's "least-known and least-predictable seats". Glenelg North's Labour man, Hamish McHenry, wooed voters with his guitar in a style known as Highland Bluegrass. The lyrics gave the game away: "We'll kill the horses with our troops. If that goes down well with the focus groups."

The *Daily Telegraph* had a rural ouget on fruit pickers in Little Pidding, in Suffolk, who were furious about a farmer's insistence that they strip off and be weighed before and after visiting his "pick your own" farm.

BC-Britain-US-Thatcher Report: Thatcher to be ambassador to US if Labor wins election
LONDON (AP) - Labor Party leader Tony Blair will appoint former prime minister Margaret Thatcher as British Ambassador in Washington if Labor wins the May 1 election, according to a news report Tuesday.
The London newspaper The Independent said that what it called the understanding had been brokered by Jonathan Powell, who formerly worked at

Foiled: How the AP news agency reported the story

Channel 5 viewers slump by a half

Channel 5's viewing figures for its second night of broadcasting fell by over half compared with its launch night as viewers turned to BBC1's traditional Easter fare of soaps and special shows.

Just 300,000 tuned in to the new channel's soap *Family Affairs* at 6.30pm and the first broadcast of its nightly entertainment gossip show *Exclusive!* at 7pm. The same number watched its wildlife programme *Wildlife SOS*, according to unofficial figures.

Its first nine o'clock film - on which so much of the channel's audience strategy is based - was *Lost in Space* with Helen Mirren, and was watched by 900,000 viewers.

The channel's Easter Monday night viewing share was just 2.7 per cent, compared with 5.8 per cent on its launch night on Sunday.

A Channel 5 spokeswoman said: "These are in line with our expectations. From our point of view the ratings are unrealistic because many people are still tuning in and the other channels are using their big programmes against us."

"We want to wait for another two weeks for a more accurate picture to emerge."

BBC1 won the Easter ratings battle, taking a 45.5 per cent share on Monday night compared with ITV's 32.7 per cent. The top rating programme was the second of two *EastEnders* episodes, which was seen by 15.3 million viewers.

It was followed by the one-off special, *Before They Were Famous*, hosted by Angus Deayton, which picked up 14.2 million viewers at 9pm. ITV's *Coronation Street* came in third with 12.7 million viewers.

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Teaching unions in conference: NASUWT delegates urged to listen to words of chief inspector, while NUT wants him sacked

De Gruchy speaks in favour of Woodhead

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

Chris Woodhead, Chief Inspector of Schools and a hate figure for teachers across the land, is not so bad after all, a teachers' union leader said yesterday.

In a statement which flies in the face of opinions held by many members of his own union and others, Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, urged teachers to relax and listen to some of what their *bête noire* had to say.

The chief inspector, head of the schools watchdog Ofsted, is widely seen as a bogeyman by members of the profession, who reject his public criticisms of teaching and standards. Their resentment peaked when he said last year that there were 15,000 incompetent teachers in 15,000 schools.

However, Mr De Gruchy, who claims never to have lost faith in the traditional teaching methods favoured by Mr Woodhead, insists that it is the chief inspector who has shifted his approach to one more in line with teachers' reasonable concerns.

The same argument was used by Labour when Tony Blair, the party's leader, confirmed earlier this year that Mr Woodhead's job would be safe under a Labour government.

Mr De Gruchy's unexpected re-evaluation came just as delegates at the NASUWT's conference in Bournemouth, Dorset, overwhelmingly agreed a motion condemning the "expensive, bureaucratic and negative" aspects of Ofsted. Among a series of changes, they called for inspections to be carried out by "a truly independent body

which is not influenced by government philosophy".

Speaking after the debate, Mr De Gruchy said teachers should listen to Mr Woodhead, even though he had "poisoned the atmosphere of education debate with some of his comments".

The chief inspector's call for a return to the traditional whole-class method in place of "trendy" child-centred ideas would mean less work for teachers, he said. It would also help them argue for extra resources, since with so many recent government reforms requiring schools to meet pupils' special educational needs, whole-class teaching was now almost impossible.

One Essex school, Mr De Gruchy said, had a class in which 16 out of 36 youngsters had special needs, and each had to have a personal plan. "How on earth can you have 16 individual education plans and then teach by the whole-class method? It just doesn't work."

The chief inspector's annual report, published last January, had contained 95 per cent positive statements on how schools were doing, the union leader said. He had produced a poster pulling out 20 upbeat quotes from the report to distribute among members.

Mr De Gruchy's remarks place yet more distance between his association and the National Union of Teachers. At its conference in Harrogate, North Yorkshire, which ended yesterday, the NUT voted for Mr Woodhead's sacking and the abolition of Ofsted.

NASUWT members may have fundamental reservations over the workload implications and negative tone of Ofsted inspections, but they want the agency reformed not scrapped.



Frustrated: Paul McMillan, who is locked in a battle with his head teacher over a disruptive pupil, at the NASUWT conference in Bournemouth yesterday. Photograph: Edward Sykes

When unruly pupils cross boundaries

Lucy Ward and
Judith Judd

Paul McMillan is, by his own admission, a tough cookie. Now a head of year at Rutlish School in Merton, south London, the 41-year-old information technology teacher has 15 years' classroom experience behind him.

Yet even this no-nonsense Newcastle United supporter, who once helped to run Rutlish's combined cadet force, in-

sists that there are some pupils who prove impossible to teach.

He is locked in a dispute with his head teacher over a 12-year-old boy whose history of difficult and disruptive behaviour culminated two weeks ago in a public threat - made in front of a teacher - to stab another pupil following a playground fight. The head maintains that Lee (not his real name) can stay, with extra classroom support, while the year head claims

enough is enough. "The boy is a full-time professional disrupter," Mr McMillan said.

"He cannot sit still. Immediately my back is turned he is out of his seat and disturbing other children, distracting them from their work. He will make personal comments about their families... He will accuse them of being gay, and the next thing you know a fight has started."

Mr McMillan's frustration was echoed by delegates to the National Union of Teachers' annual conference which voted yesterday to back ballots for strikes over unruly pupils.

In the Rutlish case, the school brought in outside counsellors to help Lee, who was transferred from another school, which could no longer cope with his behaviour, just over a year ago. If transferred that the boy and others drawn into his circle had admitted to committing crimes outside school and more advisers were invited to help deal with that.

But, for Mr McMillan, the aftermath of the playground fight over a tennis ball was the last straw. "Lee just walked up to the little lad who had been at-

tacked, who was sitting in a classroom, and said 'if you grass on me I'm going to break your nose and stab you'. This single pupil is causing havoc for the others and terrible frustration for the teachers. It is outrageous."

The head believes that an extra day a week's one-to-one support for Lee, which has been offered by the local authority, should turn round his behaviour. Mr McMillan disagrees.

"Most of my kids know where the boundaries are, but for Lee the boundaries don't exist. I can just about cope, but there will be others who are maybe not as gruff or have less experience who simply can't handle it," he said.

"We are betraying all the kids not least Lee himself, if he is not moved to a special school or pupil referral unit where he can get the attention he needs."

Yesterday's NUT vote was the first time that the conference of Britain's biggest teaching union had voted to uphold teachers' right to refuse to teach disruptive children.

By contrast, its main rival, the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women

Teachers - Mr McMillan's union - has organised, or threatened, a series of strikes over disruptive children.

Delegates at the NUT conference in Harrogate were split over the decision and made it clear that strike action should be used only as a last resort. Speakers warned that children should not be demonised and pointed out the need for more resources and better teacher training on how to deal with difficult pupils. Traditionally, the union, unlike the NASUWT, has said that such pupils should be taught in mainstream classes.

John Watters, from Manchester, said the number of violent incidents in schools was growing. Anna Rees, from Coventry, said that pupils had a right to be taught in a safe, calm environment free from verbal and physical abuse.

The number of exclusions has risen from 3,000 to 13,000 since 1990. But John Lockwood from mid-Warwickshire argued against strike action. "These children are the most difficult and seemingly intractable in the system. They are the most brutalised and damaged children

that you could hope to see. Yes, they do bad things - sometimes very bad things - but they are not bad things themselves."

Paul Vennell, from south Gloucestershire, said the blame rested with the Tory government and urged delegates: "Strike against the cuts, but not against the kids."

Meanwhile in Bournemouth, delegates at the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers' conference voted overwhelmingly to reject the principle of educating as many children as possible in mainstream schools, regardless of difficult or disruptive behaviour.

Chris Keates, a member of the NASUWT national executive, denied the union was being negative and acknowledged help should be given to address the problems contributing to bad behaviour. But she added: "Problems may explain unacceptable behaviour, but they do not excuse it. It must not be forgotten that many children from appalling social circumstances and with difficult home backgrounds behave appropriately and well in school."

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Black policeman was passed over for promotion 56 times

A black policeman waiting for promotion was passed over 56 times, a tribunal was told yesterday. Chief Inspector Martin Harding, now Greater Manchester Police's highest-ranking black officer, believed he was unfairly held back while white and female colleagues jumped the queue. The 39-year-old, who joined the force as a cadet in 1974, accused Greater Manchester Police of racial and sexual discrimination.

The tribunal in Manchester heard how, after five years as an inspector, he was found suitable for promotion by a board in 1992. But he was not appointed as chief inspector at Longsight Police Station until last February - when he had



Ch Insp Harding: Held back

already filed a discrimination complaint.

During his three years and eight months waiting in the wings, 56 chief inspectors' posts

came up in the force all of which, Greater Manchester Police told the hearing, he was considered for.

According to the evidence of Assistant Chief Constable David McCrone, read at the hearing by Ch Insp Harding's representative, Paul Gilroy, only 12 of the successful applicants for the post had passed their promotion boards before him. Of four other officers, all white and one female, who passed their board on the same day as Ch Insp Harding, three had been promoted within six months and all within a year; the tribunal was told. "I accept that the force can only promote when there's a vacancy, but I maintain I was denied promo-

tion on several occasions because of my race and because of my sex," the inspector said.

He outlined his 23-year career, which included a period as a trainee detective after which, he said, he was promised the next CID vacancy. "But that never happened."

The tribunal heard that he was turned down from a catalogue of chief inspector positions, all for various reasons.

He accused Greater Manchester Police of "changing the goalposts" to keep him out. Ch Insp Harding, who claims compensation for discrimination, said: "Had I been a woman or a white officer, I would have been promoted more quickly."

The hearing continues today.

CPS studying Hillsborough tapes

Mark Rowe
and Simon Reeve

The Crown Prosecution Service yesterday confirmed it was studying video footage of the Hillsborough tragedy which shows the disaster unfolding on surveillance cameras.

South Yorkshire Police has previously said that film of the 1989 accident, in which 96 fans on the Leppings Lane terraces died, was of too poor quality to be made available to the Taylor inquiry into the disaster and to the inquest into the deaths.

The CPS said it was paying

urgent attention to the tape, sent by the Hillsborough Family Support Group, saying that "the nature and volume of the material has generated further consideration."

It has promised the families a swift response to their calls for the case to be re-opened.

Philip Hammond, spokesman for the families, said the support group will launch a private prosecution against police officers involved if the CPS does not take action. Mr Hammond, whose son, Philip, died at Hillsborough, claims the police have covered

up the existence of the video, it was recently discovered in the archives of Yorkshire Television.

South Yorkshire Police told both the Taylor inquiry and the 1991 inquest into the deaths that the video camera which shot the footage was faulty and the pictures were of "very poor quality". But Mr Hammond said: "You can see the images, and they are very good."

South Yorkshire Police has always said the pictures were of such poor quality that its officers were forced to rely on their view from the police control room and from officers near the ter-

race for crowd control. Mr Hammond said: "What the police have done is unbelievable. It is just one big cover-up. We want to see them prosecuted."

None of the officers present at the match was available for comment yesterday. However South Yorkshire police insisted that the tape included "no new evidence", and a spokeswoman said they did not dispute the existence of good-quality footage of the disaster. She said five television coverage turned the video recordings into poor images on the monitors in the police control room.

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Ambulance service to put serious cases first

Annabel Ferriman

A new ambulance priority response system, designed to save more than 3,200 lives a year, was introduced on a pilot basis by four ambulance services yesterday.

Instead of sending out ambulances on a "first come, first served" basis – the usual practice for more than 20 years – ambulance control centres in these areas have started prioritising calls. The aim is to reduce the response time for urgent calls to eight minutes.

Trained operators ask callers structured questions to identify the most serious cases. Patients suffering from heart attacks, severe breathing difficulties, uncontrollable bleeding and other life-threatening conditions, will get immediate attention.

Four ambulance services – from Berkshire, Derbyshire, Essex and West Midlands – are pioneering the new method and all other services are expected to introduce the new system by October.

Gron Roberts, Chief Executive of the Essex Ambulance Service NHS Trust, said: "Saving time at the right time will save more lives. Saving vital minutes by attending life-threatening emergencies immediately, could save around 100 lives each year in Essex for cardiac arrests alone."

The new system is being introduced following a number of well-publicised cases in the mid-1990s, in which ambulances failed to appear quickly enough to prevent the patient dying.

Under the Patient's Charter standards in operation then, 95 per cent of calls were meant to be answered within 14 minutes in urban areas and 19 minutes in rural areas.

In one case which hit the headlines, a member of the public who phoned for an ambulance because his father was suffering a cardiac arrest, found himself talking to an answering machine.

The Department of Health set up an advisory committee

under senior civil servant Robin Chapman to devise a new system. Other experts included Dr Douglas Chamberlain, consultant cardiologist from Brighton and Dr Tom Clarke, consultant anaesthetist from Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

The committee reported two years ago, in 1995, saying that more clinically relevant standards were necessary and recommending the changes now being implemented.

The new system, known as Criteria Based Dispatch, also enables the control assistant to give pre-arrival medical advice over the phone before the ambulance arrives.

This factor alone has already saved lives in Essex, where it has been piloted for the last three years.

Medical experts felt that a new system was vital to take advantage of the advanced training now undertaken by ambulance crews and the elaborate equipment ambulances now carry, which make a considerable difference to the patient's survival.

Research shows that early treatment with a defibrillator – a device that delivers an electric shock to heart attack patients to restore the normal rhythm of the heart – is by far the most important factor in survival rates.

The new Patient's Charter Standard promises that three out of four immediately life-threatening calls will have an ambulance response within eight minutes by the end of 2,000. The ultimate aim is to achieve 90 per cent.

The Essex Ambulance Service first introduced the criteria-based dispatch system three years ago, after its chief executive, Gron Roberts, went on a fact-finding mission to the US. He saw a similar system in operation in the King County Emergency Medical Services in Seattle, Washington.

It has subsequently been assessed by Sheffield University's Medical Research Unit, which has found it to be safe and reliable.



500 years on: A replica of the Matthew at Weymouth before sailing to Bristol to re-enact John Cabot's voyage to North America. Photograph: Edward Sykes

Caobot or Caboto? It's all in the rigging

Christopher Bellamy

John Cabot's ship, the *Matthew*, left Bristol on a voyage of discovery 500 years ago. Yesterday, a replica of the ship left Weymouth for Bristol before re-enacting the first recorded English expedition to reach North America, in 1497, which formed the basis for the later British claim to Canada. Cabot, who commanded the ship and its 18-man crew with the authorisation of Henry VII, was an Italian from Genoa, Giovanni Caboto, born in 1450. When he landed in North America, he claimed it for the still precarious crown of England. There is some doubt whether he ever made it to Newfoundland. Cabot mounted a second expedition in 1498, but there is evidence the expedition was lost at sea, and no more was heard of him.

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DAILY POEM

From 'The Deserted Village'

By Oliver Goldsmith

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and meagre decay;
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made.
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
When every rood of ground maintained its man;
For him light labour spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life required, but gave no more.
His best companions, innocence and health;
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.

But times are altered; trade's unfeeling train
Usurps the land, and dispossess the swain;
Along the lawn, where scattered hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth, and cumbrous pomp repose;
And every want to opulence allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.
These gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
Those calm desires that asked but little room,
Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,
Lived in each look, and brightened all the green;
These far departing seek a kinder shore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more.

The Deserted Village, which regrets "the depopulation of the country" and attacks "the increase of our luxuries", was published to huge acclaim in 1770. It appears in Robert L. Mack's new selection of Oliver Goldsmith's verse for the Everyman's poetry series (Everyman/JM Dent, £2).

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THE INDEPENDENT election '97

Tories put tax at top of manifesto

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

The "boldest and most far reaching" Tory manifesto for two decades will today commit the Conservatives to a target standard rate of income tax of 20p in the pound, as part of a programme for increasing "personal security" across Britain.

Tory strategists are hoping that their promise to continue with cuts in income tax while abolishing capital gains tax and inheritance tax will be seen as radical, and create "clear blue water" with Tony Blair's new Labour.

But the public have grown wary of tax cutting promises, as those following Mr Major's tour to Croydon, Surrey yesterday discovered. There is abundant evidence among voters that many feel they were cheated by the increase in VAT on fuel, and the Tories appear to recognise the problem by setting the cut in the basic rate from 23p to 20p as a "target" rather than a firm pledge.

The Tories are expected to couple their tax promises with more measures on law and order, particularly aimed at cracking down on young offenders, and the revival of the measures to impose fixed sentences for repeat offenders.

There will be a promise of a great expansion in grant maintained schools, and more money will go direct to schools to stop education authorities withholding funds.

Scrapping the 23p rate of income tax would cost about £4bn, and meet a pledge first given in the 1992 election manifesto. The Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, cut 1p off the basic rate in the Budget last year, at a cost of £1.25bn, which took effect from 1 April.

The Government was committed to "moving towards" a 20p basic rate of income tax, and the manifesto to be unveiled by John Major is expected to reinforce the determination to achieve it.

Labour is aiming to establish a lower

rate of 10p in the pound, but a senior Tory source said: "Ours is achievable."

Tory strategists hope the document will enable Mr Major to claim that he is carrying the radical torch lit by Baroness Thatcher. It was described by Central Office sources as "the boldest and most far reaching that any party has published for two decades".

Mr Major will claim that Lady Thatcher came to power in 1979 when the economy was a "basket case". Eighteen years later, with the economy growing, he will offer "the next stage of Conservatism".

The source said: "That is a Conservatism that will give everyone - no matter who they are - more choice and more control over their lives. There is going to be a very strong theme of personal security."

That theme indicates the Tories are also seeking to counter insecurity in jobs and the welfare state, which Labour is exploiting in its campaign. The measures to provide more security include the plans set out by Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, for insurance schemes for those needing long term care when they are elderly, and the Peter Lilley's "pension plus" scheme which the Tories claim will provide the equivalent of a state pension of £175 a week by the year 2060.

Mr Major said the manifesto would keep public spending below 40 per cent of national income; keep on track to "virtually eliminate" public borrowing by the year 2000; ensure that Britain kept the lowest tax burden of any major European economy; maintain an inflation target of 2.5 per cent or less throughout the next Parliament and retain the opt out from the social chapter.

"Our policies will be clear cut, detailed and costed. Our opponents will be riddled with contradictions," he said. The section on the European single currency will promise the referendum, if Britain decides to join, while repealing the compromise formula that Britain would not join if the convergence criteria were fudged.



Action stations: Michael Forsyth, the Secretary of State for Scotland, at the first official press conference held by the Scottish Tories on the coming poll
Photograph: Giulio Saggin

Major strains to explain away 'stains'

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Neil Hamilton could not have remained as a minister in 1994, when he was first accused of accepting cash for Commons questions, because of the "stain" it left on the Government, John Major said yesterday.

Explaining the difference of treatment between Mr Hamilton as Minister for Corporate Affairs, and as a Conservative candidate in the election, the Prime Minister said that it had not been possible for him to remain in post as a minister with such allegations hanging over him.

But he drew a distinction between that untenable position, and Mr Hamilton's position as a Conservative candidate in the election, saying that he was innocent until proved guilty by the new parliament.

Mr Major said: "If he was a minister and if the accusations infringed on his capacity to do his job in any way, then clearly ... no stain of that kind would possibly be something you could ignore, if someone was a minister."

He said that Mr Hamilton's position was made particularly difficult by the fact that he was Minister for Corporate Affairs.

"If he'd had another job, I would have had to examine whether the charges that were being laid would have affected his responsibility as a minister."

"The key point is whether unsubstantiated charges ... and let us be clear that is what we are still talking about - whether unsubstantiated charges affect the capacity of a minister to properly carry out his job in government."

"If it does, then the wider

public interest requires that the Minister - even though he may be shown subsequently to have behaved perfectly properly - it may be appropriate for them to stand aside."

That is why Mr Hamilton, who had been appointed a minister in April 1992, after the election, had been forced to resign in October 1994.

The Prime Minister repeatedly insisted that it would be unfair to demand - as Conservative MPs did on Sunday - that Mr Hamilton should now stand aside as a Conservative candidate, pending an examination of his case by Sir Gordon Downey, Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, and the Standards and Privileges Committee that will be formed in the new parliament.

But John Prescott, Labour's deputy leader, pointed out that according to a transcript of alleged evidence given to Sir Gordon by Mr Hamilton, the Tatton MP had among other things admitted that he had lied to Michael Heseltine, then President of the Board of Trade, about £10,000 received from Ian Greer, a public-relations consultant, and that he had lobbied ministers without declaring his financial interests.

Mr Prescott said yesterday: "Although Mr Hamilton has admitted wrongdoing, the Prime Minister has chosen to ignore his public admission of guilt."

"On Sunday, senior Tories were officially asked to tell Neil Hamilton to go."

"Yesterday, John Major began to back off. Today, he has given up completely and given Neil Hamilton his support. This tells us all we need to know about John Major's weak and feeble leadership."

significant shorts

Dromey to join shortlist for safe Labour seat

Jack Dromey, one of Tony Blair's closest ally in the unions, is trying to win one of the safest parliamentary seats in the country. Mr Dromey, the husband of Harriet Harman, Labour's social security spokeswoman, was defeated two years ago for the leadership of the Transport & General Workers' Union by Bill Morris.

Labour's National Executive Committee is expected today to place Mr Dromey on a shortlist for the Castleford and Pontefract constituency and critics of Tony Blair will doubtless accuse the party of "parachuting him in". The seat - where Labour won a 23,000 majority in the last election, has become vacant with the retirement of Sir Geoffrey Lofthouse, second deputy speaker in the House of Commons.

Barrie Clement

Britons have designs on euro

Britons will be able to have a say in the design of the new euro coins, due in circulation in 2002. A "representative cross-section" of citizens in European Union member states will pass judgement on the shortlist of nine possible options before Europe's finance ministers make a final decision on the shape, size and colour of the coin.

Behind the move is recognition of the fact that EU ministers cannot agree about the eight planned denominations of the new coins.

Road cuts could cost seats

A lack of spending on Britain's roads could cost the main two political parties precious votes in key marginal constituencies, according to a new study produced yesterday. The RAC, which represents 6 million drivers, claimed "at least one-third of the key seats which both parties must win to form a government are forecast to have severe daily traffic delays".

The analysis uses the government's own figures to pinpoint which roads suffer from heavy traffic and those on course for gridlock by 2005. The RAC points to ever-increasing congestion across the country over the next few years as traffic continues to grow while road building is reined back.

Randeep Ramesh

Party's pledge to ethnic voters

A new party joined the election race yesterday with a pledge to take the interests of the ethnic communities to the forefront of the political agenda. The Birmingham-based Fourth Party, so named because it would be the fourth largest party if every eligible black and Asian for it, has pledged to bring ethnic issues to the fore.

Tory MP may face deselection over payments

Michael Streeter

Michael Brown, the Tory MP, could face moves to deselect him as a candidate over his involvement in sleaze allegations, local Conservative Association sources have told *The Independent*.

Activists in Cleethorpes, unhappy after Mr Brown admitted not registering his payments as a lobbyist for a United States tobacco firm for several years, are canvassing the electorate to see whether the party risks defeat if he stands as their candidate.

One source said: "Over the weekend there were a number of telephone calls to see what our stand should be. We want to find out what the electorate thinks."

If the association dissidents decide that the seat, where Labour need only a 6 per cent swing, is vulnerable if Mr Brown stands they will push for a new candidate at the formal adoption meeting on 11 April.

It also emerged that Mr Brown, who has been keeping a low profile in the area over recent days, survived moves to make him face deselection at the association's annual general meeting a year ago.

Melanie Dickerson, a former councillor who unsuccessfully tried to become association chairman at that meeting, said: "There were moves then that Michael Brown should go before a selection committee. At the end of the meeting there was a vote on a show of hands [when] people were asked if they were for Michael Brown - no one was asked if they were against."

"A number of people had already left in disgust. It was a messy vote."

Ms Dickerson is the second senior association member to question publicly whether Mr Brown should stand at the election. Last week councillor Peter Mills warned he would call on the MP to stand down unless he could explain the allegations against him.

Sir Gordon Downey has still to deliver his verdict on Mr Brown, who admitted last year to taking £6,000 for lobbying work for US Tobacco in the late 1980s but not registering the payment for several years. Mr Brown said he had been misled into thinking that disclosure was unnecessary.

Describing himself as a "true blue" Tory, Ms Dickerson said the MP's presence threatened what should be a comfortable Conservative win. "With him as candidate I think we have lost it. Over the last two years he has got very arrogant. He feels he has got a safe seat and does not want to listen to ordinary members of the constituency any more."

She said Cleethorpes was a "sleepy hollow" where people did not readily understand why a well-paid MP should take money for lobbying - especially from a tobacco company.

However, many senior local Tories insist Mr Brown is still their best hope of retaining the seat.

Constituency association chairman Brian Knight has described Mr Brown as an excellent MP and said they had full confidence in him. "I fully expect him to be adopted as our MP," he added.

Meanwhile another Tory MP under pressure, Piers Merchant, looks certain to win formal adoption at a meeting of his party association in Beckenham, Kent, tonight following his well-publicised relationship with a 17-year-old Soho nightclub hostess.

Mr Merchant was overwhelmingly backed by an emergency meeting of the executive committee of the association on Saturday, after it had shown clear irritation at attempts by Central Office to force their hand over the MP's future.

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Born-again party looks for converts

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

New Labour was yesterday presented by Tony Blair as a party "reborn", and open to converts from all other parties.

The Labour leader said at his first regular daily press conference that the Conservatives had become the party of the few, while Labour was the party of the many.

Appealing to people who had voted Conservative, Liberal, Nationalist or Green in the 1992 election to take a look at new Labour, Mr Blair introduced Alan Howarth, the former Tory MP for Stratford-upon-Avon who is now Labour's candidate for Newport East, as the man who would lead a taskforce to help turn Tory waverers.

"He will be writing directly to these voters to explain the case for new Labour," Mr Blair said. "His message will be simple: new Labour is real; it is a party reborn; it represents the best hope for our country."

Later, when pressed to explain Labour's repudiation of traditional support for redistributive taxation, Mr Blair suggested that new Labour was aiming to be as radical as Clement Attlee's post-war Labour government.

"The focus of new Labour," he said, "is to leave what the Eighties got right alone, but change what they got wrong - the education system, the welfare system - it is how we build these opportunities in a more divided and unequal society."

"That is what new Labour is about and if we achieve those ends, we will have achieved every bit as much as any reforming, radical Labour government of the past."

Mr Blair said that Labour was the "One Nation" party, picking up the traditions of the Tory left, "behind which people from all walks of life, all classes, all



Team spirit: John Prescott, Labour's deputy leader, pausing on his tour in Bedford yesterday to congratulate the winners of the roller hockey league Photograph: Brian Harris

parts of Britain can unite in order to provide this country with a programme of sensible, modern change."

He said that local party members in Newport East, including former miners and steelworkers,

had selected Mr Howarth as their prospective candidate in a one-member, one-vote ballot.

Mr Howarth told the press conference: "I left the Conservative Party because it has changed for the worse and I

joined new Labour because it had changed for the better. Of course, it wasn't an easy decision. I had doubts. But since the day I made up my mind, I have not had a single second thought or regret."

"Labour understands the role of the market economy, but it also seeks to heal social division and to extend opportunity to all regardless of their background. It matches support for enterprise with support for

the weakest in society. It stands for what is decent and right."

The taskforce Mr Howarth will lead comprises about 50 high-profile defectors from other parties who will be used to target wavering voters, partic-

ularly in Labour's top 90 marginal target seats.

Mr Howarth has also made a recording for "the switch-on-to-Labour line" - 0171 277 3315 - for those thinking of changing their vote.

QUOTES OF THE DAY

"Turkeys may not vote for Christmas but chickens apparently run away from broadcasts" - John Major, calling on the Labour leader, Tony Blair, to meet him head-to-head in a television debate

"The whole of my political life has been a preparation, if you like, for this period of time. I came into politics as a doer, not a seer... We are anxious to start doing" - Tony Blair

"After the false start to the election campaign before Easter, which saw Punch and Judy politics at its worst, we would like both the other parties to join us in fighting honestly on the big issues" - Paddy Ashdown, Liberal Democrat leader

"I could have planned it better" - Michael Forsyth, on the start of the Conservative election campaign

"It's better than the Boxing Day sale" - B&Q assistant in Croydon, Surrey where John Major's battlebus made its first stop of the campaign yesterday

"She's a pretty good kisser" - Chris Lacey, a young Northampton voter after exchanging pecks with the Labour leader's wife, Cherie Blair

"I'll never wash my hand again" - a woman who shook hands with the Prime Minister's wife, Norma, in Croydon

"There is no question of a single currency being imposed on the country, slunk through under cover or by a side wind" - Tony Blair

"Kenneth Clarke is supported by a dwindling band of Tory MPs who also value old Tory traditions. The wagons are circled. It's Clarke's last stand" - Labour MP (and former Tory) Alan Howarth

Compiled by Sam Coates

Insults continue to fly over television debate

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

Labour and the Conservatives continued to trade insults yesterday over the collapse of negotiations on a head-to-head television debate between the party leaders.

After Labour's announcement that the talks were "dead

in the water" and its claim that the Tories had scuppered the debate through unreasonable demands, the latter hit back. John Major used his morning press conference to issue a "challenge" to Tony Blair to meet him in a debate. "Turkeys may not vote for Christmas but chickens apparently run away from broadcasts," he said.

Mimicking Labour's campaign slogan, he added: "My message, if I can coin a phrase, is this country does deserve better. It deserves a Labour Party that will discuss the issues and a leader who has the courage to debate them with me on television."

Mr Major claimed the Conservatives had accepted the Labour offer of a head-to-head debate but had then "backtracked" on the original proposal. He said the Tories had spent two weeks

frustrating the talks about a debate. "They are more interested in personal abuse than serious negotiation, as John Major's words illustrated this morning. The truth is, John Major is mired in sleaze. He is using the debate as a desperate attempt to divert attention from the stench of corruption that surrounds his campaign."

He added: "Today, he showed again why people have had enough of him - weak, dithering, indecisive, evasive." The Liberal Democrat's campaign chairman, Lord Holmes, said the spat was just another example of the sort of Punch and Judy politics that his party spent yesterday trying to highlight. "It is difficult to believe that name-

calling by the Prime Minister, accusing Mr Blair of being chicken, is the best way to get serious discussions going again on a TV debate," he said.

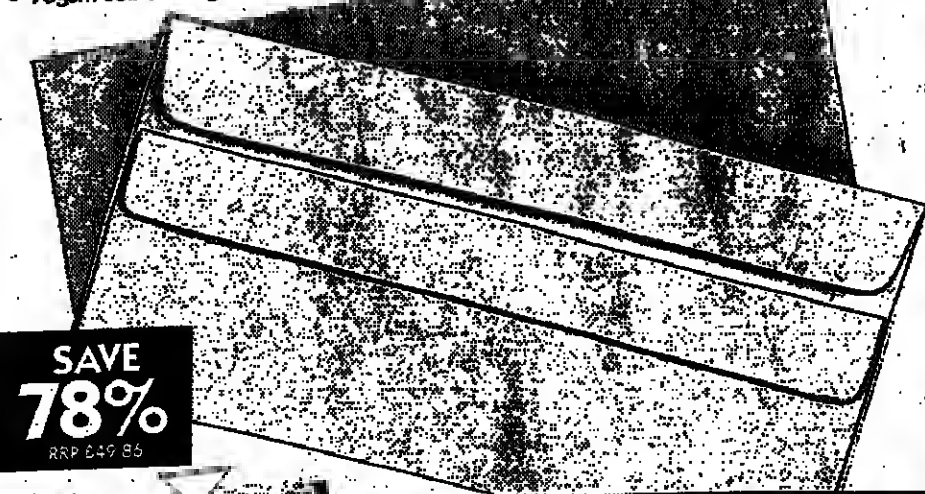
The Liberal Democrats have repeatedly argued that their leader, Paddy Ashdown, should be included in the debate, but not necessarily given an equal amount of air time.

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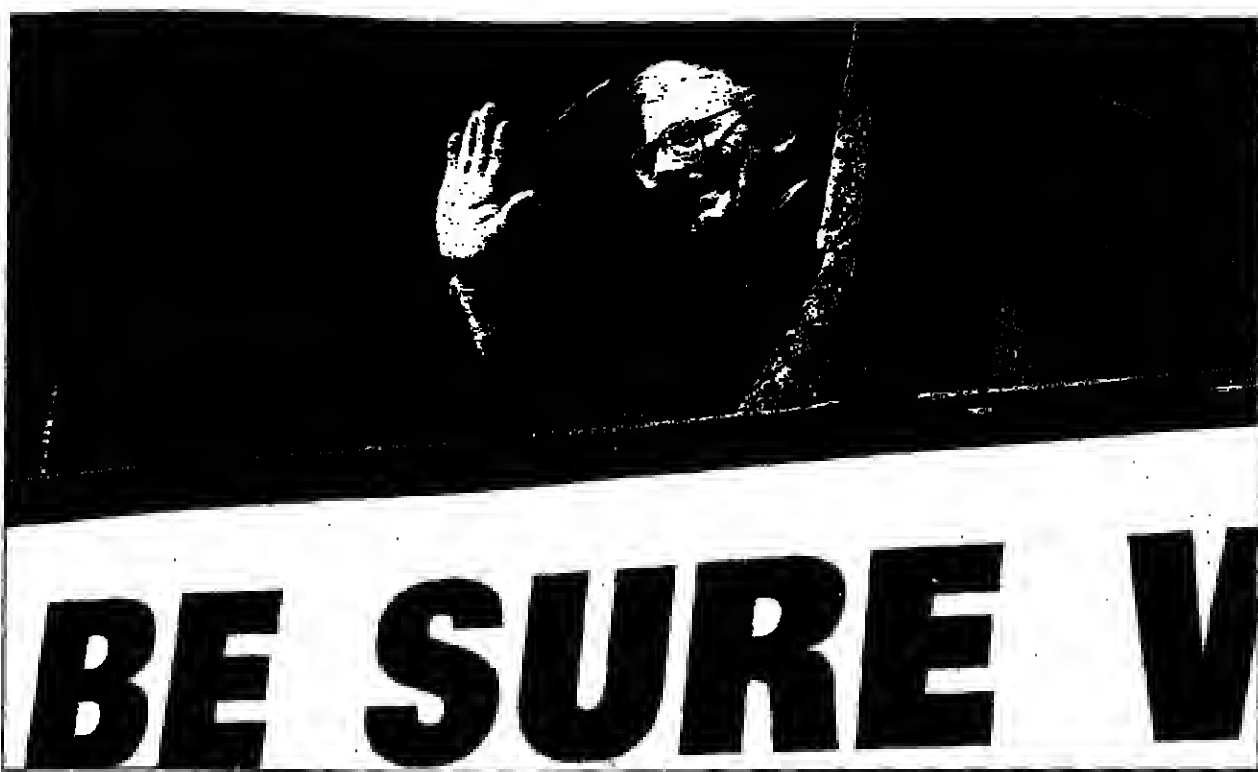
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election '97



Hand signals: John Major leaving Croydon, Surrey yesterday on his first battlebus trip

Photograph: Tom Pilston



First stop: Tony Blair fielding handshakes on his Northampton walkabout

Photograph: David Rose

Party buses head for highway battles

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Tony Blair beat John Major to the use of a new hydraulic "soapbox" when the battle of the leaders' buses moved into top gear.

The original soapbox, a battered packing case covered with black tape, which Mr Major used in the 1992 election and brought out again like a good-luck charm in Luton at the start of the 1997 campaign, has been superseded by a new platform incorporated in the side of the bus.

Mr Major will be able to emerge from a side opening door in the bus and step onto the platform, to enable him to rise above the crowd to make public speeches during the campaign tour. However, the old soapbox may be held in reserve, for a more flexible response on walkabouts.

The coach, which was used in the last general election campaign, was converted by Plaxton, a Sheffield coach firm, and is equipped with high-tech com-

Major keeps soapbox in reserve on the road

munications to keep the Prime Minister in contact with Downing Street, including a satellite telephone link, a wardrobe, toilet, and kitchen at the back.

The Majors sit towards the back of the bus with the Prime Minister's press secretary, Sheila Gunn, his special adviser, Howell James, and Shirley Stotter, the campaign manager; and there is a television handy to keep an eye on the news.

At the front of the bus is an office with links to Conservative Party headquarters, including a fax for handling confidential data from Conservative Central Office, Apricot 660 mini tower computers with 32 Mb Ram - enough for the most sophisticated computer games, and printers for Mr Major's speeches.

The risk of terrorist attack has required the bus to be fitted with armour plating, to make it bomb

and blastproof. It is also believed to be fitted with James Bond-style gadgets to counter electronic eavesdropping. Specialist work was carried out by Image Intelligence of Cheltenham.

None of the high-tech kit was needed on Mr Major's first outing yesterday in the battlebus, to a B&Q store in Croydon, Surrey. Mr Major and his wife, Norma, relied on the old political standby, the handshake, as they toured the ceramic tiles, lawnmowers and the garden plants. One woman said to her husband: "I'll never wash my hand again" after a handshake from Norma.

"It's better than the Boxing Day sale," said one B&Q assistant, as hordes of media swept through the store, surrounding the Majors. Sales may not have improved however. They did not buy anything. They found the Tory voters

remaining solid in Croydon North, the fourth most Conservative marginal seat in the country. Michael Smithson, a local washing machine repair shop owner, said he would vote Conservative "whatever happens", but not all the shoppers were surprised to be meeting the Prime Minister. The Tory candidate's mother was also among the shoppers.

There was plenty of evidence that many have not made up their minds. They include John Camenzuli and his wife Margaret, who with their three children got Mr Major's signature. "We want to be more sure about the manifesto policies. We are not very happy about breaking promises on VAT on fuel and we'd like more spending on education."

That was the view of a B&Q worker who was undecided after the Prime Minister left. "He's not like he seems on the telly. On the telly he seems a wimp. But he's quite nice in the flesh." But by then, the Major battlebus was already rolling back to Downing Street.

Steve Boggan

One suspected that Tony Blair realised what he had signed the moment he shouted: "I don't know what I'm signing!"

It was a copy of the local newspaper, and he had signed it across a garishly coloured headline that read: "The Future is Orange". Despite first impressions, however, it was not an endorsement of the Liberal Democrats. It was only a reference to the football team supported by the population targeted by Mr Blair's first visit in his campaign battlebus, Northampton town.

"Oh, no," said Andrew Ball, 25, who had slipped the newspaper under the Labour leader's pen during a frenetic walkabout round the town's market place. "I didn't realise what it said. I'm going to keep it anyway. I'm a Labour man, and the future's Labour."

Mr Ball was one of hundreds of people who saw Mr Blair stand on his "people's platform" - a retractable stage pulled from his bus - for the first time on the campaign trail.

Blair woos the crowd from his mobile stage

The Blair campaign bus, and the two following with the media on board, were emblazoned with party livery and slogans stating "New Labour - New Britain". Mr Blair's bus bore the words "Leading Britain", while the two behind had "Into the Future" and "With Tony Blair".

Mr Blair's bus, which was carrying only eight people, is kitted out with the latest technology to enable constant contact with Labour headquarters in Westminster. As well as a fax and computer, it also boasts a photocopier, kitchen facilities and a rest area for the Labour leader.

The office facilities are at the rear and include an oval seating area with a table. Nearer the centre of the bus is another table used by Mr Blair to conduct telephone conferences with party officials back in London. Mr Blair's bus plus four more

were leased at a cost of £70,500 and paid for by an entourage of journalists each paying £7,500 for a ticket.

Under blue skies and blazing sun, the crowds in Northampton witnessed a bravura performance. Unsuspecting shoppers were treated to an impromptu speech promising a fresh start for the country. And they cheered what they heard.

Over the next six weeks, we're going to set before the people of this country what we can do to make Britain better," Mr Blair said. He promised smaller class sizes in schools, a revitalised health service, better training and more jobs for the young. Then he leapt off his platform and, joined by his wife, vanished beneath a sea of handshakes and cameras.

"He is the best hope we've got," said Doris Brown, 60, a nurse who gave him a sprig of

heather for luck. "I was Conservative for years but now I'm changing to Labour."

Shopper after shopper pledged their vote and a considerable number said they were abandoning the Tories.

Mr Blair was asked by Vicky Olive, 82, how he would help the elderly. "He said the problem was a difficult one because the numbers of elderly are growing," she said. "But he promised to do what he could to avoid us having to go into care. He's got my vote." Others asked him about jobs, health and education, and he gave them the party line.

Earlier, on his battle bus, Mr Blair said he was excited at beginning the campaign proper. "It is, in some ways, a humbling experience," he said. "All these hopes and aspirations are vested in us but there is also a sense of excitement at what we can achieve. The whole of my political life has been a preparation, if you like, for this period of time. I came into politics as a doer, not a sayer... We are anxious to start doing."

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election '97

Parties accused of breaking expenses limit

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

All the major political parties are breaking the law by over-spending on their election campaigns in key seats, according to a national pressure group.

The use of computer technology to pinpoint and follow floating voters almost certainly means that candidates breach legal limits on their expenses, according to observers. Although each candidate's expenses are strictly limited, national parties can spend what they like.

Andrew Puddephatt, director of the democratic campaign group, Charter 88, said the average of £9,000 allowed for each seat was well below what many candidates would spend.

Both the main parties have already been reported to the police for allegedly spending more than they were allowed at the Wirral South by-election. The UK Independence Party says the Conservatives booked an entire hotel for a week, while Labour canvassers phoned floating voters up to half a dozen times.

Chris Rennard, campaigns director for the Liberal Democrats, said his party had spent up to its limit in Wirral but had not been able to target voters as intensively as the other two parties.

There is a strong case for saying there should be national campaign limits. As it stands, you can have adverts in every newspaper in the country and that isn't charged to candidates' expenses.

Des Wilson, founder of the Campaign for Freedom of Information, also claimed that the parties would overspend. But few people were likely to complain, he said.

That there is little relationship between the final figures submitted for the costs of electioneering in a marginal seat and what has actually been spent there. In a way, all parties have a vested interest in not raising the issue," he said.

Oona King may be black and Jewish but that cuts no ice in the East End

Kim Sengupta

She can, and probably will, become Britain's second black woman MP. And in a very short time her photogenic face will, no doubt, be one of the better known in the new Parliament. But the selection of Oona King as the Labour candidate for a very safe seat does not escape controversy.

to take Ms Abbott's seat in the neighbouring constituency, Hackney North. A Labour Party source described the relations between the two as "at best an armed neutrality".

A self-styled "Campaign for a Bangladeshi MP" has been warning that unless Labour selects a Bengali candidate, voters would desert the party. Before Ms King was selected the group placed advertisements in all four local Bengali papers asking locals to lobby the party leadership.

Ms King's father is a black American. Her mother is a Jewish woman. Some white people call me a nigger, some black people call me a yid. Many of both races sometimes call me a mongrel. But I am proud of my heritage, and I think the bringing together of cultures is what we must aim at.

The real issues are ones of poverty, and deprivation, housing and education, as well as racism. These are issues which affect us all. The fact that my mother is Jewish could symbolically be an issue if there really is a Muslim fundamentalist presence here. But again, in the context of the real problems people face, this should not matter.

It was, in fact, allegations of irregularities involving Bengali party members which allowed Labour's National Executive Committee to impose a shortlist for the seat. The near unanimous feeling in the party is that the Walworth Road's favoured son, Claude Moraes, director of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, together with a number of potential challengers, had been left out.

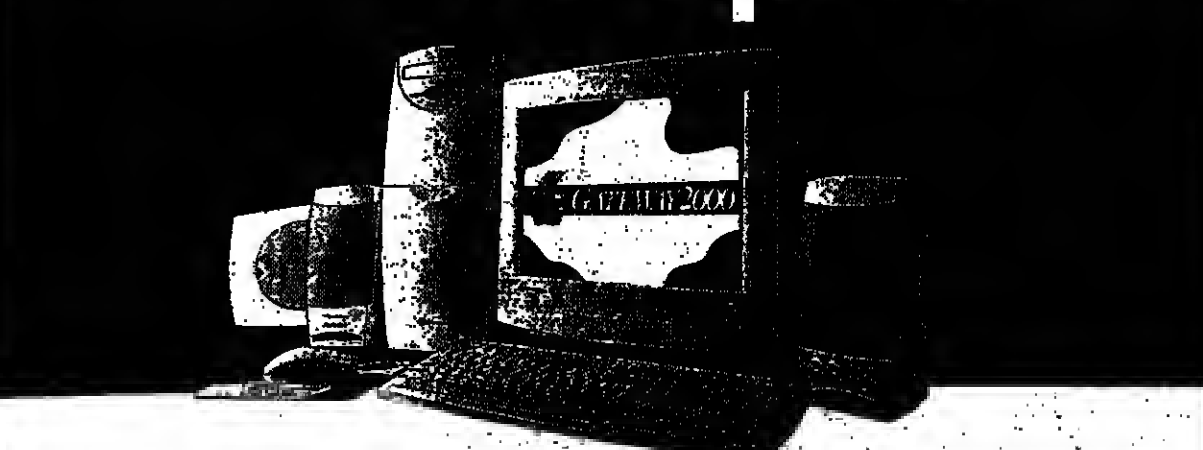
When the selection meeting came, it was Ms King, a politics graduate who had worked in Brussels with Glenys Kinnock, who benefited from the single transferable vote, and who won on the second ballot. She was, she said, "surprised" to be chosen.

In 1994, she was asked to stand at Diane Abbott's seat, which could have become vacant under rules of reselection. She did well, but did not get support from enough wards to activate the reselection mechanism. Diane Abbott's friends say the MP felt she had been "knifed in the back".



Talking politics: Oona King, the Labour party candidate for Bethnal Green and Bow, talks with a constituent in Victoria Park, east London Photograph: Andrew Buurman

Election Special



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Suicide bombers targeted school buses

Patrick Cockburn
Jerusalem

Palestinian suicide bombers struck twice early yesterday in the Gaza Strip, killing themselves but not destroying their targets, which in both cases appear to have been buses taking children to school from two Jewish settlements.

The attacks came as sporadic violence erupted in the West Bank in which two Palestinians

were killed. Although ill-organised, the bombs in Gaza show that the attack on a café in Tel Aviv 10 days ago was not carried out by a rogue cell but is part of a concerted campaign. Both bombers blew themselves up about 7am, the first, wearing military uniform, near Netzarim settlement, south of Gaza city. The second bomb was

at Kfar Darom, a couple of miles away, and was also apparently directed at a school bus. The Palestinian Authority co-ordinated the Israeli account of the second attack and said an Israeli had thrown a grenade. The only casualties, other than the bombers, were five Palestinians hit by shrapnel.

Benjamin Netanyahu, the Is-

raeli Prime Minister, said: "The Palestinian Authority has not yet made the necessary efforts against terrorism." He repeated his claim that they had received a "green light" from Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, to carry out attacks against Israelis. Jewish settlers in Gaza, of whom there are about 5,000, demanded that the Israeli army

move to reoccupy the autonomous Palestinian enclaves. Hamas, the main Palestinian Islamic movement, denied making any of the suicide attacks. But Hamas leaders in Gaza are divided into three factions. The first, led by Sheikh Imad al-Falaji, stood in the election for the Palestinian Legislative Council last year and has joined

Mr Arafat. A second faction, led by Said Abu Massameh and Mahmoud Zahar, has agreed with the Palestinian leader not to make attacks on Israel. A third group, led by Ibrahim Makadmeh, seems to be the most likely to be supporting the most recent bombings. Nobody knows how far this fragmentation is a tactical ploy by Hamas

to keep its leaders out of Palestinian Authority jails. Hashim Mansour, a policeman in Nablus, was shot dead by Israeli soldiers during a demonstration which Palestinians said he was helping to control. Another man, Kamel Zaro, was killed at a checkpoint near Hebron, allegedly when he tried to steal a car, was seen by sol-

diers and shot as he ran away. In contrast to September, when 61 Palestinians and 15 Israelis were killed, Israeli soldiers have been using live rounds during the past two weeks of riots. The deaths yesterday may mean this restraint is lessening. If there is an all-out confrontation between Palestinian security and the Israeli army, Israel has implied it will use heavy weapons such as tanks.

Children escape in Gaza Strip as Israeli soldiers shoot Palestinians in Nablus and Hebron

Is Netanyahu trying to wreck the peace process, or has he lost his way?

Israelis have started calling it the mini-intifada, a return to the days of the Palestinian uprising after 1987. In the two weeks since bulldozers started work on a Jewish settlement at Har Homa, demonstrations and riots have erupted across the West Bank.

But it is an intifada with a difference: it is accompanied by suicide bombers, who struck twice yesterday in the Gaza Strip. This shows that the explosion in Tel Aviv 10 days ago, the first suicide bomb in a year and which killed three women, was not a one-off. Unfortunately for the peace of the Middle East, suicide bombs are extremely effective.

Four bombs last year ensured the election of Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister. The implacability of the bomber and his ability to strike

in the heart of Tel Aviv is probably the Palestinians' strongest card. The political impact of the bombs is far greater than riots in Hebron or Ramallah.

In the aftermath of the violence, Dennis Ross, the US negotiator, said the peace process had life in it yet. But the problem for ordinary Israelis and Palestinians is that the process is decreasingly peaceful.

Ilan Pappé, a political scientist at Haifa university, said: "Going by what Netanyahu does rather than what he says, I'm convinced he doesn't want to implement Oslo. How otherwise can you explain the timing of Har Homa and the opening of the tunnel in the Old City of Jerusalem last year?"

Maybe Mr Netanyahu's strategy is not so coherent. Since the crisis began he has given many interviews but there is no sign

The Israeli view

Patrick Cockburn

of where he is going. He may be getting the worst of all possible worlds. Israeli troops have left most of Gaza and the main cities of the West Bank. Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, already has a quasi-state. Even when Israel held the Palestinian cities it was difficult enough to keep its grip on the occupied territories. Now that the West Bank is a jigsaw puzzle of competing jurisdictions, the Israeli army cannot even begin to cope with Hamas or Islamic Jihad without the co-operation of the Palestinian security services.

Even then it would be difficult. The Israeli army speaks of the support and equipment needed by a suicide bomber.

But any small cell with one person who is willing to die could carry out an attack. Hamas appears to have many such cells, operating independently to escape repression and, possibly, to allow leaders to disclaim responsibility. After Har Homa it is doubtful if Mr Arafat could again round up Hamas and Jihad militants, as he did last year.

In recent elections for professional unions in Gaza and Nablus, Hamas easily defeated Mr Arafat's Fatah movement.

If Mr Netanyahu has ruled out security co-operation with the Palestinians by building Har Homa, will he go to the opposite extreme and reoccupy the autonomous Palestinian enclaves? "If they do... they will not be welcomed with flowers," said Marwan Barghout, secretary of Fatah on the West Bank. Israel's security services have

warned Mr Netanyahu against trying to do this, because it would provoke a worse conflict.

It is not fair to blame everything on Mr Netanyahu. Oslo was always deeply flawed. The agreement looked better to diplomats than to the Israelis and Palestinians whose lives it would most affect. It was contradictory. Israel was to withdraw but settlements were to stay. A new system of by-pass roads was to connect the settlements. It was based on the assumption that for the Palestinians anything was better than the status quo.

They would be satisfied by any crumbs that came their way. But Israel is finding out, as European colonial powers discovered in the first half of the century, that home rule will not satisfy a nation demanding self-determination.



Flashpoint: Palestinians clashing with Israelis yesterday in Nablus. Photograph: AFP

A raw deal, all the way from Madrid to Oslo

Beirut - Arab leaders are still warning of the imminent collapse of the "peace process" but the Palestinian diaspora are talking about doomsday. "Don't talk to me about American mediation - they cannot be 'honest brokers', one of the most experienced Palestinian officers in Lebanon told me yesterday afternoon after taking another call from Gaza on his mobile phone. "What we have to do now is ensure all the Palestinian opposition are united together against Israel, not struggling against each other under Israeli occupation."

Not long ago, his words might be dismissed with contempt. But the calls were coming from Palestinians in the occupied territories, anxious to ensure the Palestinians based in Lebanon and Syria were not going to engage in inter-Palestinian struggles if "the end" comes. "It's a turning-point in the war between our two peoples," the Palestinian said. "The old 'intifada' is finished - the new intifada will be qualitative. We cannot go on throwing stones and setting tyres on fire. There has to be direct contact with the Israelis."

It didn't take long to understand what this means. If the Lebanese guerrilla war against the Israelis, which drove the mighty Israeli army back to the southern frontier of Lebanon, was an example to the Palestinians, would not the Palestinians from Lebanon who are now in the West Bank use the tactics they had developed in the Lebanese war in any coming battle with the Israeli army? Yes, the Palestinian said, he wanted his people to talk to the Israelis, to try to persuade them desperately to reverse the events set in motion by Prime Minister Netanyahu's decision to construct the Jewish settle-

The Arab view

Robert Fisk

ment on occupied land. But he didn't hold out much hope. "Madeleine Albright [US Secretary of State] is still talking about putting the 'peace process' back on track," he said. "But she can't. The US has lost all its credibility."

There are few Arabs who would disagree when the most pro-Israeli US government ever is vetoing any condemnation of the Jewish settlement. As an Egyptian journalist said yesterday: "It's the same old story - the Israelis provoke the Arabs by some flagrant violation of the peace, the Palestinians react violently and then the Americans line up behind the Israelis in condemning 'terror'. Our president (Mubarak) is openly saying he was betrayed. He's right - he was betrayed - by the Israelis and by the Americans."

Arabs list the reasons why Washington has so fatally lost control of the "peace process". How can it be a "middle-man" when its ambassador to Israel is former head of the largest Israeli lobby group in America? How can President Clinton understand what the Israelis are doing to the "peace" when his advisers include a former Israeli army officer who served on the Lebanese border scarcely three years ago? Fewer Arabs remember how many of them so blithely accepted the flawed Oslo agreement of 1993, which fatally undercut the results of the 1991 Madrid summit. At Madrid, they were promised land for peace based on UN Security Council Resolution 242. Oslo allowed the Israelis to renegotiate 242, deciding for themselves which pieces of Palestinian territory they would

hand back - and when - while closing off Jerusalem with further settlements before final-status talks. After that, the Beirut camp official said, it was only to be expected that Mr Netanyahu would refuse to give back the occupied Golan and accuse Syria of not wanting peace.

Mr Mubarak did say yesterday that he was still waiting for Mr Netanyahu to honour his word by the "peace process" - he is saying much harsher things to his advisers - while the Israelis are now trading insults with virtually every Arab nation with whom they had, until last year, some semblance of relations.

Can Mr Mubarak trust Mr Netanyahu? When I asked the Israeli Prime Minister in Cairo last month whether Palestinians could buy new homes in Jewish west Jerusalem, as Israelis are to be allowed to in the Arab east of the city, he said he thought they could - "so far as I know."

But this is untrue. They are prevented from doing so. Mr Netanyahu says he will provide Arab as well as Jewish homes. Israel promised 18,000 Arab apartments next to the Jewish settlement of Pisgat Zeev in 1980. Not one has been built. On Monday an Israeli spokesman insisted on the BBC that "there is nothing in the (Oslo) agreement, in any shape or form, that limits what Israel can do in its own sovereign capital." But nowhere in the Oslo agreement is there any reference to all of Jerusalem being Israel's "sovereign capital".

The truth is that the Arabs - for all their dictatorial leaders and secret policemen and torture chambers - believe they have been taken for a ride. Which is why some of them are thinking of how to fight for their islands of territory in the West Bank rather than make peace from them.

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المسألة من الأصل

Ready for take off? Some French aircraft may be grounded but the great EU monetary-union Jumbo is trundling down the runway



Going nowhere: Passengers stranded at Nice airport yesterday by the Air Inter Europe ground crew strike

Photograph: Eric Gaillard/Reuters

Strike blocks open skies flight path

John Lichfield
Paris

The symbolism was, to say the least, unfortunate. The official opening of the era of Open Skies in Europe began with most of the flights of the largest French internal airline grounded by a strike.

From this month any airline in the European Union can, in theory, offer flights between any two EU airports, including two cities in another country. France, which has the biggest single domestic air market, is the most lucrative potential target for other European carriers. British Airways has already muscled in. Lufthansa is said to be considering a network of French domestic flights, linked to global flights from its Frankfurt hub.

The stoppage by ground staff at Air Inter Europe yesterday were a protest against this long-promised brave new world of cheaper and more plentiful European air-travel. The French government has ordered the gradual merger of the two loss-making, state-controlled airlines - Air France, for external flights, and Air Inter, for internal flights - specifically to face up to the increased competition.

The 11,000 staff at Air Inter, which now becomes Air France Europe, fear jobs will be lost and privileges eroded. The international carrier, with 46,000 staff, is engaged in its own programme of restructuring. Air Inter pilots, who fear their

promotion will be frozen, began a series of strikes last week. Yesterday was the turn of the ground crews. Shuttle flights from Paris Orly to Marseilles, Nice and Toulouse were maintained. Other flights were cancelled. Further stoppages are expected next weekend.

This was an inauspicious beginning to the era of Open Skies, but all is not quite as it seems. Air industry experts believe the French government has taken advantage of the open market policy to push through a rationalisation of the publicly-owned French airlines. Yesterday's deadline was more symbolic than real. Many countries, including France, have already introduced the more relaxed regulations legislated in Brussels two years ago. There has already been some impact on the number and price of flights within the EU. Ticket prices have fallen by about 10 per cent in the last three years and are expected to continue to fall.

But there remains a wide gap between the theory of free competition and the reality. Potential competitors find their wings clipped by the shortage of landing and taking-off slots at the highest European airports. On the other hand, there is a genuine problem with overcrowding at the main Paris airport, Charles de Gaulle-Roissy and last week the French government announced plans to build two new runways at the airport in the next three years.

Ministers to buckle euro into timetable

Sarah Helm
Brussels

European leaders will this week reassert their determination to launch the single currency on time, when they identify late April 1998 as the time for final decisions on which countries qualify to join at the start.

Agreement on the outline timetable, expected to be reached by European finance ministers meeting on Saturday in the Dutch town of Noordwijk, will demonstrate, once again, the enormous political will to drive the Emu process forward.

The ministers will use their informal meeting to scupper

crucial first six months of 1998, and therefore may be able to exert some influence over how the

process unfolds. The decision is up to the member states, whether Britain should choose to join Emu, and whichever party wins the election will have little time to sit on the Emu fence. Given the tightness of the timetable, it appears increasingly unlikely that any British government would be able to prepare in time for the 1999 launch.

The Labour manifesto, to be published today, will signal new Labour doubts about Emu, talking of "formidable obstacles" to be overcome if membership of the first wave is to be considered.

Even if a British government should wish to be considered for the first wave, it would first have to meet several conditions, including passing legislation to create an independent central bank. And it would have to pass legislation on a referendum.

The highly controversial question of whether membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism should be deemed to be a condition of membership has still not been finalised. The ruling on who qualifies will be based on the economic results for 1997 - and central bankers wanted the decision as early as possible.

Several member states, however, have recently been pushing for more time. France has pushed for the decision date to be set after the French parliamentary elections in March.

In Noordwijk the finance ministers are expected to decide that two key economic reports on member states should be ready by the end of February 1998. These reports, from the European Commission and the European Monetary Institute, the central bank-in-waiting, will go to European finance ministers.

Six weeks later - by late April - heads of government will make their final decision.

Several member states have been pushing for more time

speculation about a very different kind of timetable - for a single-currency delay.

The decision on how many countries join the euro will be the most crucial moment in the Emu build-up, and many fear it could prove highly divisive, particularly if Italy, Spain or Portugal are rejected.

A final ruling on qualifiers in late April - instead of earlier in 1998 - as central bankers had wanted - could boost credibility of the Emu project, by buying more time for the southern Europeans to make the grade.

However, the later the decision date, the more problems could be caused in the final months. Late April gives countries which do qualify just eight months to prepare for the launch on 1 January 1999.

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France boosts Albania force by 1,000

France is to offer 1,000 troops with armoured cars and armoured personnel carriers to join a multinational security force to protect humanitarian relief operations in Albania.

An aide to Defence Minister Charles Millon said Paris was offering to handle security in the port of Durres, and organise and escort supply convoys from there to the capital, Tirana. Italy will organise and lead the multinational force and is expected to provide 2,000 to 2,500 troops. Greece has offered 700 troops; Turkey, 500; Spain, 500 and Romania, 400 troops. Reuters - Paris

Ellis Island solution

A Supreme Court-appointed officer proposed what he said was a "workable" solution to settle a dispute between New York and New Jersey over ownership of Ellis Island, the US immigration processing centre from 1892 to the mid-20th century. Law professor Paul Verkuil recommended New York keep the most historic part of the island but New Jersey get the bulk of the land. Reuters - Washington

Saddam libel suit thrown out

A French court dismissed a libel suit by Saddam Hussein against a French magazine, ruling the Iraqi leader instead should have sued under laws protecting chiefs of state from insult. The decision, in favour of weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur*, ends Saddam's chances to seek restitution under French libel law. AP - Paris

Indian crisis could stall talks

India and Pakistan, fresh from upbeat peace talks, said a political crisis in New Delhi might delay efforts to resume substantive bilateral negotiations.

Pakistani Foreign Minister, Gohar Ayub Khan, said planned talks next week with his Indian counterpart, Inder Kumar Gujral, might be put off because of a looming vote of confidence in the Indian Prime Minister, Deve Gowda. Meanwhile Pakistan's parliament amended the constitution, stripping the president's powers to sack governments and appoint armed forces chiefs, giving them to the prime minister. Reuters - New Delhi

Second crash kills two in Spain

The passenger train whose derailment in northern Spain killed 18 people was going four times as fast as it should have been when it crashed, authorities said.

Just hours after the disaster, a second derailment near Madrid which killed two people and injured 22 yesterday morning raised questions about the safety of Spain's rail system. Reuters - Madrid

Fire leaves 10,000 homeless

Nearly 10,000 people were left homeless after a fire, blamed on children playing, razed a slum in the Kenyan port city of Mombasa. Reuters - Mombasa



City arms: Viktor Chernomyrdin, the Russian Prime Minister, inspecting Interior Ministry troops at the opening of a new barracks in Moscow yesterday. Photograph: Reuters

Yeltsin harks back to the USSR

Moscow - Just over five years after he signed the Belavezky document, which broke up the Soviet Union, Boris Yeltsin is hoping to put pen to paper again today, this time in an effort to put parts of the former empire - Russia and Belarus - back together again.

He is expected to meet his Belarusian counterpart, Alexander Lukashenko, to sign an accord over the creation of a union between the Slavic neighbours which, while falling short of fusing them into a single state, appears to be a big step towards reintegration.

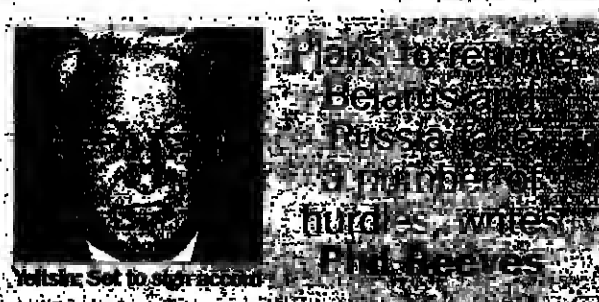
If it goes ahead, the signing will come after several days of debate in Moscow's political circles about the wisdom of pressing on with reunification with an unreformed and repressive Soviet-style nation whose economic woes could easily turn out to be an extra burden on Russia's crippled exchequer.

After negotiations which saw the head of Russia's Security Council, Ivan Rybkin, fly to Minsk for last-minute talks,

Mr Yeltsin's spokesman yesterday announced that the President wanted to proceed. The Union Treaty was a "geopolitical necessity and an economic reality", he said.

But it was unclear how weighty a document the two presidents will sign. The Kremlin said Mr Yeltsin was proposing a shorter one than planned, which would state "in black and white that the parties will transform the Community of Russia and Belarus into a union and transfer some of their powers to the union." But it also said Mr Yeltsin wanted a further mouth of discussion about a charter outlining the accord.

In doing so, he appears to have bowed to pressure from his own administration, which was deeply split over the issue. The union envisages co-ordinated economic, foreign and defence policies, without giving up national sovereignty. While generally favouring closer ties with Minsk, Boris Nemtsov and Anatoly Chubais - the youthful free-marketisers now calling



Yeltsin Set to sign accord

the shots in the Russian government - reportedly feared it was being rushed through.

Their reservations are shared fivefold by Russian liberals who balk at the idea of closer ties with Mr Lukashenko, whose human-rights record is even worse than Mr Yeltsin's.

Belarusian opposition leaders have been beaten and jailed, demonstrations have been broken up by police using batons and tear gas, and the media have been censored.

Although a closer union of Russia and Belarus may cause

frowns in the West - particularly among Russia's big lenders, such as the IMF - it offers domestic advantages to both leaders. Mr Lukashenko, 42, a former Soviet farm director, stands to increase his popularity in his 10 million-strong nation, where he has cultivated a mood of nostalgia for the Soviet Union. Belarusian nationalists fiercely oppose it, but they are a minority.

He may also be covertly eyeing the Russian presidency, although that would require the two countries fully to reunite, a process that will take some years. Such a move would meet

with cries of alarm in the West, and particularly in the US, which has been embroiled in a war of words with Mr Lukashenko, culminating in the recent expulsion from Minsk of two US diplomats.

For Mr Yeltsin, there are gains - but also possible losses. It will deepen rifts with ex-Soviet members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which do not welcome the idea of a Russian super-state. The President of Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, has said that different levels of unification in the CIS was an "absolute nonsense" and would pave the way to its destruction.

But a Russia-Belarus union would win Mr Yeltsin much-needed applause at home, especially among conservatives and Communists. Many Russians are unconcerned by Mr Lukashenko's murky rights record, and would welcome a move to rebuild part of the Soviet Union and increase Russia's standing on the world stage - especially given Nato's eastward

expansion. Moscow would benefit from securing a firmer grasp on a corridor to the West for its oil and gas exports, and by reconnecting businesses that split up when the USSR folded. The treaty is thought to make commerce easier by protecting property rights and - in admittedly loose language - "creating the conditions" for a single currency.

But many warn that Russia's largely privatised economy is currently incompatible with Belarus's centrally planned and mostly state-owned one.

Although Minsk has been claiming growth in output, these figures are thought to be based on stockpiles of unwanted goods. It is, most analysts agree, even worse off than Russia.

Ultimately, the success or failure of today's events depends on whether the union finally comes to fruition. It is worth remembering that a batch of economic agreements signed a year ago by these two men are still widely ignored.

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War crimes: 'Evita' linked to looted Jewish funds

South American states in search for Nazi gold

Phil Davison
Latin America Correspondent

Spurred by efforts to trace Nazi loot in Swiss banks, South American Jews want to know what happened to billions of dollars' worth of gold, cash and artwork by fleeing Nazi officers after the Second World War. Most of the officers, and their booty, ended up in Argentina or Brazil.

In Brazil, a five-man presidential commission, which includes two Jews, began a government-funded official investigation this week. It hopes to finish its inquiries in 18 months.

"The aim is three-fold," said commission member Henry Sobel, senior rabbi at Sao Paulo synagogue. "One, to find out how many Nazis came to Brazil and how much they brought with them. Two, to trace what happened to those funds. And three, in collaboration with the World Jewish Congress, to distribute any recovered funds to Holocaust survivors."

aim would be difficult, but said the commission had already had tip-offs about large investments by ex-Nazi officers in Brazilian firms after the war. These firms could be pressured to make reparations rather than face negative publicity, he said.

In Argentina, where thousands of Nazi officers were welcomed with open arms at the end of the war by President Juan Peron, investigations are moving slowly.

Last month, President Carlos Menem's government said complete Central Bank archives would be placed at the disposal of investigators from the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Centre.

published this month by the Argentinian Jewish community, based mostly on declassified United States documents, is expected to reveal the complicity between the Nazis and Juan Peron and his girlfriend and eventual wife, Eva.

In the years after the war, "Evita" reportedly travelled to Switzerland to liaise between underground ex-Nazis on laundering their funds through Switzerland to Argentina.

The World Jewish Congress believes that Swiss banks received gold ingots from the Nazis, melted them down in other forms and shipped them to Nazi accounts or deposit boxes in South America.

There has long been speculation that senior Nazi officers used submarines to flee to Argentina with their loot in a network aided by the Vatican and the Swiss-based International Red Cross. Divers are currently trying to find a U-boat off the southern city of Viedma, in the hope that it may carry gold or other treasure.



Casting out: A man throwing an explosive device into the sea at Vlorë, Albania, hoping to catch stunned fish; violence has cut the country's food supply. Photograph: Reuters

Death penalty dilemma faces Oklahoma jury

Tim Cornwell
Denver

The Coloradans called for jury service in the Oklahoma City bombing trial, like the rest of us in court, had all seen the TV film and photographs of Timothy McVeigh, the mass murder suspect in an orange prison jumpsuit with shorn hair and staring eyes.

"I just saw that picture of him they showed over and over," said Juror 653, a woman in her sixties. Yet here he was in the flesh, nodding a polite hello and half-rising in his chair as he was introduced. He looked younger than 28, in brown suede shoes, khaki trousers and a mauve-blue shirt with an open collar.

He sat casually at the defence table, neither shackled nor in a dock. Jury selection in the Oklahoma City trial at times resembled some macabre, very American gothic novel, complete with comic breaks. The first of several hundred likely to be vetted ranged from a churchgoing "personal shopper" to an unemployed pipe-fitter who took the truth only from God, and was, therefore, ineligible.

They were quizzed about how much they watched the OJ trial, brothers in the police force and how much they surfed the Internet. They talked about their mental breakdowns and how often they liked to jog. But the main question was whether they were prepared to sentence the young man sitting opposite to death.

"How does the notion of a government-ordered execution strike you?" a prosecutor asked Juror 855, who was posted near Cambridge with her Air Force husband and got much of her news, she said, from *Reader's Digest* and *Garden and Home* magazine. "In the right circumstances, I believe it's right," she said firmly.

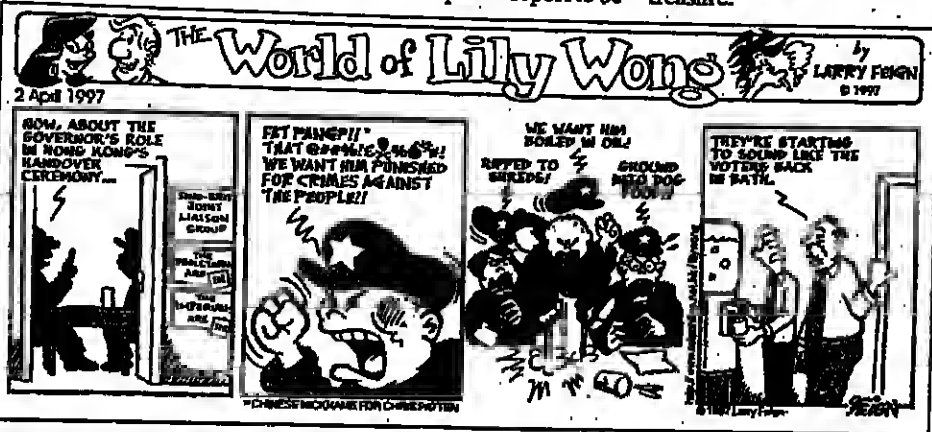
tion process is a much-criticised part of the great American trial. Lawyers use it to probe for potential jurors' foibles, even as they cove up to them in the only chance they will have to talk to them directly.

Mr McVeigh seemed watchful but remarkably relaxed, neither nervous nor at a loss. At times, he studied the jurors' questionnaires, his fingers laced together. Even in this emotionally charged setting, with 168 people dead and grieving relatives in court, the hearing ran from the mundane to moments of absurd comedy.

Juror 630 had been hospitalised for two breakdowns, and complained of stress. "You're not the only one that gets heart palpitations and shortness of breath in front of Judge Matsch," Mr McVeigh's attorney, Stephen Jones, told her, in one of several quips aimed at the judge. Under *voir dire* rules, Juror Richard Matsch and lawyers for both sides must find 64 jurors who are "death qualified" - willing to pass a sentence of death - and not biased or unfit.

Both defence and prosecution then have the chance to "bounce" 20 people for no reason, aiming to winnow the numbers down to 12 jurors and six alternates. The prosecution says it will take two weeks to sit a jury. The defence, promising a rigorous examination in the light of pre-trial news reports that Mr McVeigh confessed, says four. Mr McVeigh's team includes the jury consultants who helped win a not-guilty verdict in the celebrity rape trial of William Kennedy Smith.

In the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing, US Attorney General Janet Reno promised that the culprits would face the ultimate penalty. If the jury in the Federal court finds him guilty, they must then consider the death penalty in a separate hearing.



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obituaries / gazette

Lesley Cunliffe

Lesley Cunliffe, who was born with every virtue and talent a good fairy could bestow, has died, aged 51, with her potential apparently unfulfilled. While she did not have the child prodigy's body of work her admirers awaited with mounting frustration (procrastination was her greatest enemy), she left a more subtle legacy in the remarkable number of friends and acolytes to whom her encouragement and direction was pivotal in their own successes. Like Sir John Betjeman, she had the gift of seeing the divine in the ordinary. Her variation of this gift was in her ability to communicate to others her vision of the divine in themselves.

She was born Lesley Hume in Springfield, Massachusetts. Her mother, Patricia Spooner, had careers in fashion, public relations and real estate and her father, Robert Hume, was an air force officer who then worked on building projects around the country.

She was educated at various Roman Catholic schools in America, and spent time in Alaska and in Haight Ashbury, San Francisco, before returning to New York, where she worked in television as assistant to Gabe Pressman of NBC News. In 1971 she married Marcus Cunliffe, the English-born author of *The Literature of the United States* (1954), who was 23 years her senior and then Professor of American Studies at Sussex University.

With him she wrote the presidential biographies for *Burke's Presidential Families of the USA* (1975), voted Reference Book of the Year by the *US Library Journal*.

In 1979, the year she separated from Marcus Cunliffe, she began her English journalistic career as a tea lady on *Weekend magazine*. She was swiftly headhunted by Ann Barr to *Harper's & Queen*, where she became a sub-editor before Barr introduced her to the writer Craig Brown, having an inkling that the two would do well to collaborate on articles. The collaboration bore fruit in book form - *The Dirty Brit* (1981) and *The Book of Royal Lists*

(1983). Cunliffe went on to do *A Child's Passport to Paris* (1985) before taking up various editorial positions - Beauty Editor of *Tatler* (1985-89), Beauty Editor of *American Vogue* (1989), Contributing Editor of *English Vogue* (1990-96) - and becoming a freelance contributor to numerous publications including the *Times Literary Supplement*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Sunday Times*, *Sunday Telegraph* and *Evening Standard*.

Her work for *Vogue* was characterised by her huge bank of knowledge - she was entirely self-educated and spent hours of every day engrossed in everything from medical encyclopaedias to histories of the police force to the interviews of Studs Terkel and Tooy Parker, with whom she had much in common, being easily as sympathetic and extractive an interviewer.

At *Vogue* she would be called upon at the drop of a hat to write a profile of Norman Parkinson or the Sirells, as she was probably the only person in the building who had all the knowledge necessary at her disposal. It was better, in truth, to get her to write with an urgent deadline, as procrastination tended to make her make a misery of anything with a long deadline. Her style sparkled with intelligence, knowledge and wit.

Her physical impact was always dramatic. She was 30 when I first met her in 1975 but jaws were still dropping on Cadeques in Spain where she had gone to recuperate from TB. Lesley Cunliffe viewed her looks, correctly, as a genetic *fait accompli* rather than an achievement and as therefore unworthy of praise. She was completely "unlooks-ist" about others. I remember congratulating her on her appearance, to which she replied matter-of-factly, "Oh Mary, thank you darling, but there was a time before I got TB when I could be certain that I would always be the best-looking person, male or female, in any room. Now I've lost it I'm beginning to realise how convenient it was..."

I didn't know her before she managed to get TB from a Sherpa guide in Kathmandu, but it was a disease which suited Cunliffe because there was nothing she liked more than being ordered to rest on medical advice. It was heaven for her to be excused grown-up responsibilities, to stay in bed with books, being nursed and having a stream of fans come to her bed in the sanatorium with presents.

When she was given the diagnosis of inoperable stomach cancer in the early 1996, she told me, with typical childlike charm, that she wanted to die in her flat in Bloomsbury so "we can play hospitals".

Lesley Cunliffe was five foot ten and slim. She had a ravenous appetite throughout her life and an enviable ability to consume huge numbers of calories without their making the slightest impact on her elegant frame. Others might have a cheese sandwich for lunch but one could always depend on finding Cunliffe tucking into something like minute steak with new potatoes and salad and red wine. The reliable presence of good food and wine, wardrobes full of beautiful clothes and huge white bath towels on her radiators were all elements in the creation of the *jolie de vivre* which always surrounded her.

Suffolk was her favourite county and in London she preferred the Georgian rooms of Bloomsbury. Once she lived in a converted Georgian building in the back garden of a house in Rugby Street.

She always induced happiness in her visitors. Her eclectic style combined utter elegance with an eye for the witty. She owned one of the earliest plastic tomatoes from a hamburger joint, which was supposed to be filled with ketchup. She filled it with washing-up liquid. It was so hideous it was funny.

In her decorative taste, simple classic elegance would be offset by the quirkiest of paintings and objects - among her junk-shop finds was a naïve painting which, authenticated by Eardley Knollys, turned out to

be of Marcel Duchamp playing chess with Bismarck, painted by his wife.

She owned a clockwork dinosaur which spat fire and, when she lived with Craig Brown, the pair, whose childlike natures exactly complemented one another's, were always buying things like indoor fireworks. I remember going shopping with them once around 1981 and as we walked through the centre of Leazes in Sussex, Brown suddenly propelled Cunliffe to a shop window.

"Look, Lesley Toys!" She also possessed a tapestry cushion showing a husky in Alaska that anyone else would have overlooked. She was proud of her ability to spot not just things but people "who no one else would have thought of", as she would drawl in her characteristic American barktone. Among the rollcall of male admirers were the poet Ted Hughes, the writer Hugh MacLennan, the journalist Stan Gahler, Dennis and the cartoonist Michael Heath.

One reason why Lesley Cunliffe was loved not just for her life-enhancing, witty company and the aesthetic pleasures of being with her or on her premises, was that she excelled at flattery. One always felt really good when with her and came naturally to associate her with happiness. Yet, though the skill of flattery is much less used in this country than in America, she was over fulsome, nor insincere. She would find a genuine quality to praise and people who genuinely did have talent - who were too lazy, lacking in connections or opportunities to express it. Then she would insist that doors were opened for them, would steer them through and they would succeed - buoyed by their belief in Cunliffe's belief in them.

Following her bout of TB she never felt that well. Symptoms, sometimes psychosomatic, often came over her and the fatiguing pace of her life could make her want to close down and go to bed, despite her social arrangements. "I can't take any more stimulation," she would groan from a Georgian daybed



Cunliffe: versatile, eclectic, 'unlooks-ist', a writer of intelligence, knowledge and wit

surrounded by dozens of lilies sent by men in love with her. Often there would be a female devotee present whose purpose, as the writer Andrew Barrow accurately described my own in the early 1980s, was to be a "lady in waiting".

Once Cunliffe felt she couldn't face dinner, it was 8.30 and the people she was supposed to be meeting would be already sitting down at their table in the restaurant. How could she let them know since it was Langan's Brasserie, there would be hundreds of diners present and she did not know in what name their table had been booked.

She rang and exercised her charm. "You'll easily be able to pick them out," she said. "They'll be the fattest and ugliest in the restaurant." Within minutes a waitress had identi-

fied them and brought them to the telephone. As I say, she was not at all looks-ist.

There was chain-smoking, far too much coffee every day which made her jittery, a frustrating inclination to read Patrick Walker's horoscopes in the *Evening Standard* and then obey what she imagined to be his dictates... All these factors combined to thwart her full potential, though what she did write was always stimulating, acute and memorable. Her versatility as a journalist was striking - whether writing a political study of Alaska where she had lived, serious interviews with leading feminists of the day, beauty writing for *Tatler*, fashion writing for *Vogue* or ferreting out unusual and amusing details for her *Book of Royal Lists*.

She was religious (a Catholic)

and her superstitious nature would have rejoiced in the fact that she died on Good Friday and at the moment when the comet Hale-Bopp, was midway between its closest alignment to the sun and the earth before skimming off into space for the next four and a half thousand years.

When, on her deathbed, Lesley Cunliffe expressed regret for her lack of achievement one of her friends, Ann Carey, said: "But you've made the greatest achievement of all. You've been loved for yourself alone."

Mary Killen

Lesley Hume, journalist and writer: born Springfield, Massachusetts 21 May 1945; married 1971 Marcus Cunliffe (died 1990); marriage dissolved 1980; died Adderbury, Oxfordshire 28 March 1997.

Fred Spielman



Spielman: "Yan-de-da-da, I love to play this melody"

Though his songs were sung by Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra and Judy Garland, the name of Fred Spielman (as Fritz Spielmann called himself in America) is little known today. One of several Viennese composer musicians who fled to the United States in the late Thirties, his work never achieved the sort of sustained popularity that led to public recognition, though his work encompassed Broadway, Hollywood (where he was under contract to MGM) and Tin Pan Alley.

He was born in Vienna in 1906, and displayed an early flair for the piano and for composition, in which he was encouraged by his engineer father. He studied at the Music Academy of Vienna under Joseph Marx, but on leaving abandoned plans to be a concert pianist and instead took work in night-clubs and composed popular songs,

one of which, "Warum spielt bei den Schinkenleckerl' alleweil das Fleisch Versteckert?" became a hit. With the rise of Nazism, he went to Paris and just before the outbreak of war managed to leave on one of the last ships for Cuba. There he married, and with his wife sailed for New York to settle on the Upper West Side.

One of his first compositions, "Shepherd Serenade" (1941, lyrics by Kermit Goell) became a hit with best-selling recordings by both Bing Crosby and the Horace Heidt band. He teamed with George Gershwin's brother Arthur to write the score for a Broadway musical, *The Lady Says Yes* (1945), starring Carol Landis, but the only song to stop the show was an interpolation by another composer, and the show lasted only 11 weeks. Spielman then decided to move to Hollywood,

where he had already provided material for the Andrews Sisters to perform in their roles as munition workers in *Swingtime Johnny* (1943).

After providing songs for Ann Dvorak in her role as a dance-hall hostess in *Adeline* (1946), he signed a contract with MGM as a house composer. For *Lucy* (1948), a glamorous piece of escapism in which Jane Powell was a showgirl on the liner captained by her father, Spielman provided a lulling Viennese waltz, "Gypsy Dance Back to Vienna" (with Janice Torre and Fritz Rotter), while for *In the Good Old Summer Time* (1949) he wrote for Judy Garland a vibrant ballad, "Merry Christmas" (lyrics by Janice Torre). Though tender and touching, it lacked the appeal to become a holiday standard.

Spielman overwrote complete scores for MGM musicals, but contributed numbers to *Big City* (1948), *The Duchess of Idaho* (1950) and most of the songs for *Tom Thumb* (1958). In 1950 he had a surprise hit with a melody composed during his childhood days at the Academy. Adapted as "One Finger Melody" by Al Hoffman and Kermit Goell, it was recorded by Frank Sinatra and spent 16 weeks on the Hit Parade. (Its lyrics, "Yan-de-da-da, I love to play this melody..." preceded its becoming a lasting standard.) "Paper Roses", a country-and-western song written in 1960, became a hit 13 years later when recorded by Marie Osmond, and in 1962 he provided a song for the Elvis Presley musical *Girls, Girls, Girls*.

In 1969 he and Janice Torre composed the score for a television musical, *The Singlets*

Man in Town, based on A Christmas Carol. The starry cast included Basil Rathbone (as Scrooge), Vic Damone, Patrice Munsel, Johnny Desmond and Martyn Green, and the Columbia LP of the soundtrack is now a collectors' item.

Spielman's final hit came by chance when in 1990 the jazz singer-pianist Shirley Horn was watching a Joan Crawford film, *Torch Song* (1953), in the middle of the night and was taken by a ballad sung by the star ("ghosted" by India Adams). Called "You Won't Forget Me", it was written by Spielman and Kermit Goell, and had been totally forgotten. Horn recorded it and it topped the jazz charts.

Tom Vallance

Fritz Spielmann (Fred Spielman), composer: born Vienna 20 November 1906; married; died 21 March 1997.

Yorozuya Kinnosuke

An actor can change his name and even his sex in the hothouse world of the Japanese kabuki theatre.

One of Japan's most popular actors, Yorozuya Kinnosuke, known in his fans as "Kin-ehsan", who appeared in many sword-fight films and television series after making his debut on the kabuki stage, was born Kin'ichi Ogawa into the distinguished Nakamura kabuki dynasty, in which his father was the leading actor Tokizo Nakamura III. Kinnosuke's relatives were all kabuki players. But it was his peculiar misfortune to be born as the youngest of three brothers - his two elder brothers got all the best parts. As the baby of the family, he made his first appearance on stage at the age of three, spouting lines he could hardly have comprehended in a high-

pitched falsetto. He was considered a very talented child.

After graduating from junior high school in 1948, he followed in the theatrical footsteps and adopted the distinctive acting style of his father, who was a first-class *onnagata* - a term for which "female impersonator" is much too crude a translation. Female roles in kabuki are always played by men, and some of these artists portray certain types of women so perfectly that geisha and *maiko* (apprentice geisha) study their performances to learn subtleties of feminine refinement in dress and comportment. Indeed, the males who play *onnagata* are more womanly than any real woman, and that is part of their eternal fascination.

Kinnosuke was a good-looking youth, a fine natural ac-

tor with a pleasant voice. His ability to incarnate all the charms and adopt the psychological complexities of ravishingly lovely princesses or glamorous ladies of the stage was so outstanding that when, in 1953, at the age of 21, he crossed over the sexual divide and started playing male parts, his defection from the ranks of true *onnagata* was felt by his fans to be a tragic loss to the tradition. He had conquered, and broken, many hearts in both men and women.

He had hoped that by changing to male characters he might be able to rise in the family hierarchy dominated by his two elder brothers. But he could only obtain minor roles in which to display his virtuosity as an *onnagata* had always made him feel frustrated and discontented with kabuki.

One day in 1954, he was playing his usual small male part on stage, and did not know that in the audience at the Kabuki-za was a celebrated singer of *enka* or popular sentimental songs, Hibari (The Lark) Misora. She was looking for a suitable male actor to play her lover in the film version of a *jidaigeki* or period drama, following her great success that year in the film of Yasunari Kawabata's novel *Izu no odoriko* ("The Izu Dancer", 1952).

Kinnosuke jumped at the chance to escape the domination of the kabuki hierarchy. But his father was enraged at his defection, and made him promise over to study the boards of kabuki again, a promise his son had to keep in keeping. That first film with Misora was *Hyakurashi* ("Tale of the Brown-Eared Bulbul"), one of

the big hits of 1954. It brought Kin-ehsan a contract with the Toei film company, which was starting a new line in juvenile adventure serials. Television had only just begun appearing, so the cinema was still the main form of popular entertainment. But most films were for adults; so when Kin-ehsan started appearing in films especially targeted at young audiences, his popularity started rising and gave birth to the social phenomenon known as "the Kin-ehsan Boom".

Thus he led the way for many kabuki actors to make their names in the cinema. Kin-ehsan's other films include *Fushigi Jishi* ("Child White-Player") with his famous theme song, and *Hani Kujaku* ("Red Peacock"), followed in the late 1950s by virtuoso character portrayals of the brutal 16th-century tyrant (also

a patron of the tea ceremony and other arts) Oda Nobunaga, and of the great swordsman Miyamoto Musashi, in films named after them. Such successes led to the founding of his own Nakamura production company in 1968, when he began appearing in hit television series like *Haruno sakamichi* ("Spring Slope") and *Kozure Okami* ("Wolf Samurai Boy").

In 1972, he changed his name to Yorozuya Kinnosuke. He was now free to try new themes and expand the traditional forms of *jidaigeki*, which became more realistic, with really gory sword-fights and harakiri. But in 1982 Nakamura Productions went bankrupt, and Kinnosuke collapsed with myasthenia: he could not even open his eyes. But in 1984 he made a miraculous recovery and was honoured with a come-

back in a television special of *Kozure Okami*.

In July 1996, he had an operation for throat cancer. The surgeon had assured him he would not lose his voice, which indeed was unimpaired, and he began preparing for another comeback. But it was not to be. In any case, the almost total destruction of the Japanese countryside by building speculation and concrete river-banking made it impossible to find authentic location settings for *jidaigeki*.

Yorozuya Kinnosuke had been the only remaining hope for the genre's survival, so his death marks the passing of great Japanese acting and film traditions.

James Kirkup

Yorozuya Kinnosuke, actor: born Tokyo 20 November 1932; died Kashiwa City 10 March 1997.

Pupul Jayakar

Pupul Jayakar, better known as India's "cultural tsarina", presided over the country's cultural scene for nearly 40 years, exposing its many facets overseas through expensive promotional extravaganzas in the 1970s and 1980s.

Jayakar's closeness to three succeeding prime ministers - Jawaharlal Nehru, his daughter Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv - helped firmly establish her cultural suzerainty. And by the early 1980s Jayakar's immense talent, unchallenged haughtiness and arrogance, which she made little effort to hide, made her a formidable force, often hated and feared in New Delhi's incestuous power circles. But when the face-off with Rajiv Gandhi finally in the late 1980s, she quietly relinquished power and retired in her flat in Bombay, buying herself with writing and advising on cultural matters.

Jayakar had an uncanny eye for excellence. She talent-spotted people long before they blossomed and encouraged several painters and artists who are today household names in India. She was a good organiser, tirelessly promoting local handloom and handicraft products and establishing the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), primarily to preserve decaying monuments, in the early 1980s.

She also opened several design workshops, devised marketing strategies to develop traditional crafts and started the National Crafts Museum in the late Eighties and, in 1990, the National Institute of Fashion Technology in New Delhi.

But Jayakar used India's cultural vastness as a lever of power. She began by organising cultural festivals during the internal emergency declared by Indira Gandhi in the mid-1970s, to divert attention from the suspension of civil liberties which was brutally imposed. These were followed by the grandiose and hugely expensive Festivals of India in London, Paris and America lasting several months in the early 1980s and the politically correct Alpha Utsav or "Our Festivals" in Rajiv Gandhi's time which earned the silver-haired and plump Jayakar the sobriquet of "cultural tsarina".

She travelled extensively to remote places in India, seeking out local handicrafts and traditional skills and was a cultural chameleon, at home in contrasting milieus. Convinced she could do no wrong, she said once, "I do not have to justify my actions to anyone. I can look back with satisfaction that I have lit a few lamps in this country."

Born in 1915 into a Brahmin family from the western state of Gujarat, Jayakar was tutored privately at home by an Irish governess employed by her father, who was a member of the Indian Civil Service. She attended Bedford College in London before graduating from the London School of Economics in 1936.

On returning home she married Manmohan Jayakar, a barrister, and settled down in Bombay where she launched *Tor Tor*, an English-language children's magazine illustrated by Jamini Roy and M.F. Husain, two of India's best-known painters. In 1940 she was appointed to the National Planning Committee headed by Nehru and came into close contact with Indira Gandhi who, on becoming prime minister in 1966, appointed Jayakar as her cultural adviser.

During the late 1940s Jayakar had become an ardent follower of the philosopher and theologian J. Krishnamurti and wrote his biography, which was published in Britain in 1986. She also wrote *Earthen Drum* (1981), an illustrated book on India's mural art forms, and *The Buddha* (1982), a philosophical treatise for young people. A gracious and charming conversationalist and host, she had impeccable taste in clothes and was a graceful mixture of Indian and Western traditions.

Kusidip Singh

Pupul Mehra, cultural adviser: born Etawah, India 11 September 1915; married 1937 Manmohan Jayakar (died 1972; one daughter); died Bombay 29 March 1997.

BIRTHS

RANDIE: To Kareo (née Rydings) and Antony, a daughter, Madeleine Charlotte Anne, on 26 March 1997, a sister to Alice and Arthur.

DEATHS

BROWN: Professor Sir Malcolm Brown, former Director of the British Geological Survey, passed away peacefully on 27 March 1997 in Oxford, after a short illness. Darling husband of Sally and much-loved stepfather to Polly and Verna. Funeral service at St Andrew's Church, Old Henington, Oxford, on Thursday 10 April, at 1.30pm. Family flowers only please; donations if desired to Sir Michael Schell House may be sent to Revue & Pains, 289 Abington Road, Oxford OX1 4TE.

HAWKINS: Freda E. on 14 March 1997. Professor Emeritus in Political Science at the University of Toronto and author of significant works in the immigration field. Her daughter,

Births, Marriages & Deaths

Rosind Burford, of London, England, her sister Sylvia Green, of Woking, England, together with her former husband Gordon, her other relatives, colleagues and many friends mourn her passing in her 78th year. At her request there will be no funeral service. It would however be appropriate that any expressions of condolence take the form of donations to Oxfam.

For Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS, please telephone 0171-293 2011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2012) or fax to 0171-293 2010. Charges are charge £6.50 a line (VAT extra).

Birthdays

Admiral Sir Michael Boyce, Second Sea Lord, and Commander in Chief Naval Home Command, 54; Sir Jack Brabham, racing driver, 71; Sir Graham Bright MP, 55; Mr Linford Christie, athlete, 37; Mr Richard Collinge, cricketer, 51; Mr Marshall Sir Geoffrey Dineen, 79; Sir Richard Dobbs, former Lord-Lieutenant of County Antrim, 79; Sir Christopher France, former senior civil servant, 65; Mr George MacDonald Fraser, author and journalist, 72; Mr Paul Gambaccini, disc jockey, 48; Miss Catherine Gaskin, romantic novelist, 68; Mr Brian Glover, actor, 63; Mrs Myra Green, director of the East European Partnership, VSO, 59; Mr Raymond Gubby, concert promoter, 51; Sir Alec Guinness, actor, 83; The Right Rev Richard Hawkins, Suffragan Bishop of Crediton, 58; Mr

Barry Hills, racehorse trainer, 60; Sir Ian Hunter, impresario, 78; Miss Penelope Keith, actress, 57; Sir Peter Middleton, a deputy chairman, BZW Banking Division, Barclays Bank, 63; Maj-Gen Christopher Popham, former director, British Atlantic Committee, 70; Mr Michael Rizzello, sculptor and coin designer, 71; Sir Denis Rooke, former chairman, British Gas, 73; Miss Sue Towson, author, 51; Mr Denis Twyld, broadcaster, 60.

Anniversaries

Birther Charlemagne (Charles I, Carolus Magnus) King of the Franks and Emperor of the West, 742; Mark Shylla Meislin (Grady) painter and engraver, 1947; Franz Lehner, composer and conductor, 1893; Hans Christian Andersen, author, 1805; Teodilo Mabellini, conductor and

composer, 1817; William Holman Hunt, Pre-Raphaelite painter, 1827; Leon Gambetta, statesman, 1838; Emile-Edouard Charles-Antoine Zola, novelist, 1840; Sir Neville Cardus, cricketer and music writer, 1889; Jack Buchanan, actor and singer, 1891; Max Ernst, Surrealist painter and sculptor, 1891; Serge Lifar, choreographer, 1908; Deafie, Gerard Edelstein, engraver, 1907; Honoré Gabriel Riquetti, Comte de Mirabeau, politician and writer, 1751; Richard Cobden, politician, 1789; Edward O'Connor, inventor, 1872; Edward O'Connor Terry, actor and theatrical manager, 1912; Vibhaji Ranjitsinghi, Maharaja of Nawanagar, cricketer, 1933; Jean Epstein, film director, 1933; Wolfgang Rihger, composer, 1941; Cecil Scott Forester, novelist, 1948; Georges-Jean Raymond Comollet, President of France, 1974. On this

day: the Royal Society was granted its Charter, 1663; the Mint of the United States was established, 1792; the naval Battle of Copenhagen was fought, 1801; the first parliament of Italy met at Turin, 1800; Zazel, an acrobatic lady, was fired from a cannon at a London circus, 1877; the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race was first broadcast, 1927; the opera *Merrill England*, by Sir Edward German, was first performed, London, 1902; Sandhurst and Woolwich were combined to form the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, 1946; the United Nations Security Council voted to place former Japanese-held Pacific Islands under United States trusteeship, 1947; Nato Allied Command, Europe, was set up, 1951; Argentina invaded and captured the Falkland Islands, 1982. Today is the Feast Day of Saints Aquila and Theodotus, St Francis of Paola, St John Payne, St

Mary of Egypt, St Nicetas or Nizier of Lyons and St Zosimus.

Lectures

National Gallery: Mari Griffith, "Couples (1): Wright of Derby, Mr and Mrs Thomas Colman", 1pm

Appointments

Judge David Clark QC to be a Senior Circuit Judge on the Northern Circuit, sitting at Liverpool Combined Court.

Lady Britton, Dr John Mayberry, Ms Anne Owens, Professor Arrom Sherr, Rauff Soudhi and Mrs Rosemary Thompson, to be members of the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct.

Mr Justice Toulson, to be a Presiding Judge of the Western Circuit.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Duchess of Gloucester opens the Benson Centre and the Brigade Mental Health Unit at Glenfield, Leicester, the Royal Leicestershire, Rutland and Wellingborough Society for the Blind, Welcome Home Project, Eynes Murrell, Leicestershire, and the Hinchley and Districts Music, Holeside, Leicestershire, and as Patron, National Association of Gifted Children, attends a dinner to mark the association's 30th anniversary at Howver International Hotel, Henley. The Duke of Kent visits the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action, Llys Iwer, Ceredigion. Miss Gloriana Owen, Technical Glass Ltd, Cardiff (Ray, Cardiff), and Technological Science Discovery Centre, Cardiff (Ray, Cardiff) and as Grand Master, the United Grand Lodge of England, attends a dinner at Masonic Hall, Cardiff.

Changing the Guard

The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am in Harrold Scots Guards mount the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Grenadier Guards.

Giving up on children – now that's naughty

"Some children are just plain naughty," said a speaker at the NAS/UWT teachers' union conference in Bournemouth yesterday. How wonderfully quaint, inordinate, maybe. Violent, often. Psychopathic, even. But naughty? If only.

There is a growing problem of discipline in our schools, even if the NAS/UWT has a vested interest in exaggeration. It has decided that its pitch in the battle to recruit members is to make an issue of classroom disorder, the theme of its conference. If the schoolmasters and women teachers sometimes sound as if their union's mission is to exclude as many pupils as possible, it is because it is engaged in fierce recruitment competition with the NUT, which believes in "inclusive" education.

This week, the lines of argument were starkly drawn. The NAS/UWT called for disruptive children to be taken out of mainstream schools and dealt with in special schools and "pupil referral units". The NUT called for more resources and smaller classes to help teachers to deal with difficult pupils, and condemned attempts to "demonise" troublemakers.

This is an important debate, in which the NUT is right in ideal principle while the NAS/UWT is right in practical reality. It is right, in principle, that all schools should try to assimilate disruptive children and change their behaviour. It is wrong, in principle, to dump problem children in special units,

where they are likely to be pushed from pillar to post, because after pillar-and-post they move on to crime. It is wrong, in principle, to label children negatively. This point is often derided as political correctness, but is an important aspect of inclusive education. Chris Keates, the speaker who labelled "some children" yesterday as "just plain naughty", was not just quaint, she was wrong. Children may do terrible things, and they may persist in doing them, but to label them is to give up on them. What was worrying, too, was her use of the word "naughty", which would normally only apply to primary-school children. To write off children as irredeemable before the age of 11 is to abdicate responsibility. Even if a few children are in fact irredeemably "bad", that cannot be the governing assumption of public policy.

But our schools are not places where pure principles are easily applied. In practice, the laudable aim of inclusiveness (once known as the comprehensive principle) is so far from being realised that different rules apply to the world as it is.

Mainly due to government policy, more than 11,000 children are excluded every year – triple the number three years ago. This educational underclass has been created partly by the introduction of league tables, which give headteachers an incentive to use exclusion as a form of post-entry selection.



ONE CANADA SQUARE CANARY WHARF LONDON E14 5DL
TELEPHONE 0171-293 2000 / 0171-345 2000 FAX 0171-293 2426 / 0171-345 2436

If your exam results are likely to bring down the average, then make sure your top button is done up, or you go.

The NAS/UWT wants the underclass to grow. This is the union that threatened to strike in the Ridings school, Halifax, and Manton junior school, Worsley, if disruptive children were not excluded. It is the union whose leader, Nigel de Gruchy, last month called for 100,000 disruptive pupils to be transferred to special schools so that teachers could get on with teaching.

While having sympathy with the problems that teachers face in many schools trying to maintain discipline

and order, the de Gruchy solution is the wrong one. But the direction of education policy cannot be reversed overnight, and the union is right to focus on classroom discipline as a problem to be solved rather than as a sociological phenomenon to be explained. There are analogies here with the Blairist formula on crime, a closely-related issue. Government and schools must be tough on indiscipline and tough on the causes of indiscipline.

This means that children who disrupt the education of their peers must continue to be removed from the classroom. League tables should be pre-

sented in terms of "added value", in order to reduce the incentive to discard low achievers, but disruptive children must be ruthlessly and fairly dealt with.

Much more attention must be paid, however, to those who are excluded, and to the causes of their exclusion. At the moment, the situation is chaotic. Neither central government nor local councils know how many children are not at school for disciplinary reasons. According to an Ofsted report last year, pupil referral units, which are supposed to provide these children with tuition, are expensive but do not provide good value for money. And because most children are excluded from school "permanently", the system is not geared to getting them back into mainstream education.

The causes of the breakdown of order in so many schools are many and complex. Problems that begin in the home are exacerbated by the glamorisation of violence and materialism in popular culture, and are allowed to flourish by the disorder encroaching on our public spaces generally.

But it is in primary schools that many of the causes can be dealt with, or at least mitigated. As teachers in Bournemouth testified yesterday, discipline is increasingly a problem in this age-group, although stories of chair-throwing five-year-olds have to be treated as curios rather than as bases of sound policy. It is important that all

primary schools have a disciplinary code: it does not really matter which of many good schemes is adopted, as long as it is clear, and clearly communicated to parents. This, rather than labelling children "plain naughty", is the way forward. And in this, the teaching unions are also right: discipline and order in the classroom should be at the forefront of the Great Education Debate which ought to be dominating this election but sadly, as yet, is not.

Puppets on the political stage

In the hackneyed comedy that is contemporary British politics, the Liberal Democrats' theme of yesterday was to present Tony Blair and John Major as Punch and Judy. This is an intriguing piece of casting. Was there something about the Labour leader's physiognomy that suggested the brute with the baton? Was it the weakness of Mr Major's political position that suggested him as the female (now there's sex stereotyping for you). But the Lib Dems have not unfolded the whole plot yet. Are we supposed to think of their party as the Policeman in the playlet, keeping Punch and Judy honest? Modesty forbids, but surely the role of Crocodile belongs to the newspaper press.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Reservations about new doctors' oath

Sir: Thank you for informing us that the British Medical Association has updated the Hippocratic Oath on our behalf (report, 28 March). As a member of the BMA and a practising clinician in a teaching hospital, I have had no prior warning of this and would appreciate the opportunity to make some comments.

While welcoming the excision of Apollo, Aesculapius and "all the gods and goddesses", and agreeing to leave cutting people "labouring under the stone" to my esteemed urological colleagues, I nevertheless have some serious reservations about the proposed new oath.

First, there is the removal of the vow to abstain from the seduction of patients. Had that part become unnecessary? Sadly not, as cases over recent years have shown. Many patients put themselves in a vulnerable and potentially compromising position with members of our profession, trusting that doctors will not take advantage. We should not hesitate to assert that we will not.

Second, there is the agreement to carry out abortions "within an ethical and legal framework". The chairman of the BMA has stated his intention that this oath should come into use by every doctor from every medical school. Will they be obliged to sign? Will abortion under certain circumstances become a duty?

I welcome an update in the language of the Hippocratic Oath, but I deplore the change in its spirit. When our medical students graduate, I shall be advising them not to sign.

HUGH J THOMSON
Consultant Surgeon
Birmingham

Sir: The proposed rewriting of the Hippocratic Oath brings to mind Labour's rewriting of Clause Four. Both prompt the question: how do we come to be living in such cocksure times that we think our own (often semi-literate) versions are superior to those of the founders?

The tail end of the 20th century is hardly ever going to be described by posterity as an age of enlightenment. Dumbing-down greed, yes. Wisdom and insight? You must be joking.

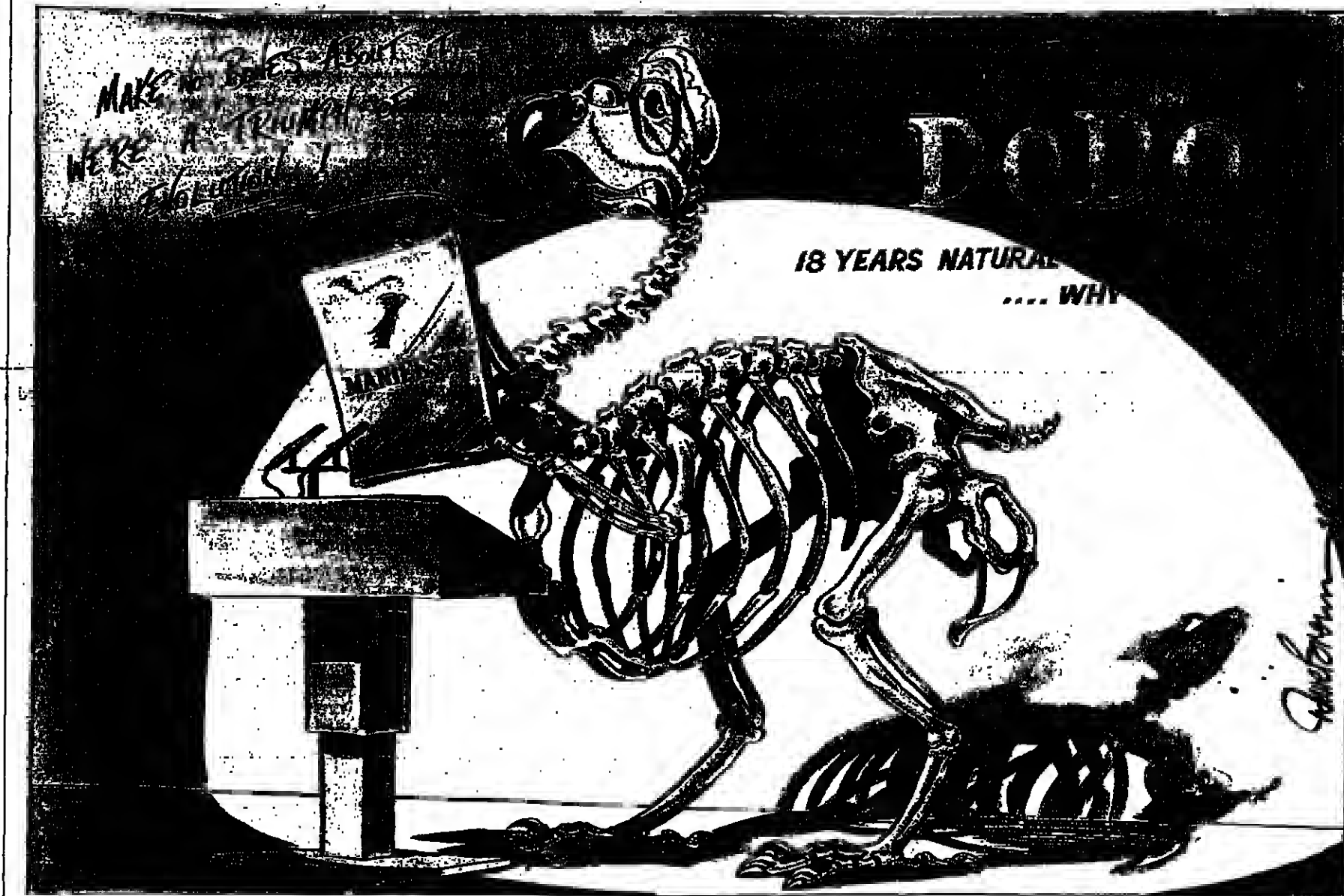
IAN FLINTOFF
London SW6

The Civil Service: a national asset

Sir: I was delighted to see the recognition given to the devastation wreaked on Whitehall by the current Government ("Whitehall ruined by Tory years", 31 March), belated though it might be.

I suppose that one must be grateful to former top mandarins for seeing fit to save their consciences by herating the Government, albeit from the comfort of their retirement and secure in their honours. But how much more effective would their protestations have been if they had been prepared to fight harder against the downsizing and break up of the Civil Service while still in office.

As a former senior mandarin who was made redundant last year after nearly 30 years – during which time my remuneration was abated time by time – I was supposed to enjoy – I saw little evidence of anything other than slavish acquiescence to Ministers' arbitrary decisions. The result has been to risk the reduction of the Civil Service to a cadre whose driving force is not one of devotion to the public interest but pursuit of individual ambition. The nation is in danger of losing one of its most precious assets.



JOHN DORRICK
London N10

Don't vote – take action

Sir: April Fool! I hope you see the funny side ("Swampy joins political race", 1 April). I have no intention of standing for any election. It is as much a farce as politics in general is a farce.

There are several points to doing this. First to bring forward the issues involved; to offer solutions to the growing problem of pollution from roads and air traffic. I hope that the present political parties will take on board our manifesto and rethink their own policies. Lastly I would like to point out that direct action is far more important than voting. All the main parties are pretty much the same. Most politicians have vested interests in road-building companies, car manufacturers or airports. People should take a stand to make a change.

If you must register your vote, write "none of the above" on your voting paper, so people know how many people are fed up with being trampled upon by politicians and more importantly, the large multinational companies who pull the strings.

SWAMPY (D. HOOPER)
Manchester Airport Second Runway,
Cheshire

How green is your valley?

Sir: Your article "How green is your party?" (26 March), ignored Plaid Cymru, although our policies are far more geared to sustainability than are those of the three main London-based parties.

Our programme for restoring full employment to Wales proposes investment and job creation in public transport, pollution control and energy conservation. We would fund our proposals partly through a carbon tax (whilst cutting VAT on domestic fuel), a "congestion tax" on car use in urban centres, and other environmental taxes.

Plaid Cymru's four MPs have been more active in the House of Commons in pursuing a green agenda. In conjunction with the Green Party and Friends of the Earth, I introduced two bills which were later taken up by other MPs and are now law: the Home Energy Conservation Act and the Road Traffic Reduction Act. In this election, Plaid Cymru and the Green Party are the only parties backing all the points in the Real World coalition's "action programme".

Although environmental issues are already higher up the election agenda than most commentators expected, this is not because of initiatives from the Tory, Labour and Liberal parties, but because of the widespread public annoyance about politicians trying to dodge the really important

questions about sustainability and survival.
CYNOG DAFIS MP
(Cardiff and Pembroke North, Plaid Cymru)
House of Commons
London SW1

Sir: There is no doubt that many aspects of the Common Agricultural Policy have contributed to the intensification and specialisation that has brought so much destruction to the animals and plants of agricultural habitats, yet to abolish the CAP (letter, 28 March) on these grounds would be to leap from the frying pan into the fire. The removal of regulation in favour of the unfettered play of market forces would have devastating consequences not only for farmers and rural communities but also for the people and wildlife of Britain and the rest of Europe.

The problems that we face in conserving agricultural landscapes and their wildlife are Europe-wide, though with distinctive local peculiarities that must be addressed. Agricultural markets are international and biodiversity is an international asset. Animals do not recognise political boundaries. For these reasons, there must be a European dimension to agricultural policy. The CAP needs radical reform, not abolition, to integrate farming with the environment and to help restore our farmland birds and other wildlife.

Dr JEREMY J D GREENWOOD
Director, British Trust for Ornithology
Thetford, Norfolk

Behind the image of Mountbatten

Sir: The image of India's last Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, faded globally long before Jan McGirk discovered it had ("Image of last Viceroy fades under new order", 31 March).

In his book *Eminent Churchillians*, Andrew Roberts, the historian and biographer, demolishes the image of Lord Mountbatten as a military planner and describes him as "a mendacious intellectually limited hustler, whose negligence and incompetence resulted in many unnecessary deaths – the numbers of which increased exponentially as his meteoric career progressed".

Roberts' main criticism of Mountbatten is directed at his role in the hasty, unplanned and unsupervised partitioning of India.

Any population transfers that were demanded could have been properly supervised and protected. Then – and only then – the country could have been partitioned and the two countries declared independent. In not following this common-sense sequence – indeed in taking the steps in almost the reverse order, with such horrific consequences – Mountbatten deserved to be court-martialled on his return to London.

As India celebrates the 50th anniversary of its independence in August this year, it should demand from the British government a public inquiry into the circumstances leading to its

partition in 1947 and especially the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people in the biggest transfers of population in history.
M RIAZ HASAN
Harrow,
Middlesex

The economics of normal behaviour

Sir: Diane Coyle's article ("Mainstream economics needs to get a firm grip on reality", 27 March) provided an answer to a mysterious lack of substance behind the explanations as to why the last recession did not recover but kept on going.

In 1991 the recession had been underway for a year or more and showed no signs of recovery, unlike other recent recessions. The explanation given for this was that people were not increasing their borrowing as they had done previously at the same stage of the cycle, a possible reason for this being that the very size of outstanding debts inhibited "normal" behaviour.

What puzzled me at the time was that, although the explanation seemed plausible, there appeared to be no follow-up, no monitoring of (say) consumers' attitudes to debt, spending and job security. How else could the end of the recession be predicted?

By turning away from the importance of history and culture economists risk misunderstanding their subject. Diane Coyle is right to call for a more broadly based understanding of economics – the sooner the better.
DUNCAN LYONS
London SW18

A taste for meaninglessness

Sir: In trying to convince us that "it is demonstrably absurd to claim that the Universe is meaningless", Andrew Brown lapses into absurdity himself ("True confessions of a religious correspondent", 27 March).

Clearly if "meaning" is a category that human beings impose on an alien environment" then it is a product of their psychology which came into existence only when they did. Of course the cosmos does have structure but that isn't the same thing as meaning and Brown acknowledges that he isn't talking about anything that can be established scientifically.

To an evolutionist there is no need to try and make meaning or purpose retrospective any more than there is a need to look for a painting on an empty canvas. And one man's absurdity is another man's mystery. *Chacun à son goût.*
D W EVANS
Leeds

Sir: I was rather surprised to note (Letters, 31 March) the spokesperson of the Rationalist Press rejecting belief in abstract ideas – I always thought rationalism itself to be one. Indeed, that all ideas are the product of abstraction, by definition.
FR DOMINIC KIRKHAM
Manchester

Tilting at windmills

Sir: I was intrigued to read in your article "Flagship East Coast line fails to run trains on time" (27 March) that the company is intending to buy new tilting trains to increase journey times. Perhaps Great North Eastern Railway has taken a leaf out of Cunard's book by fitting out the new coaches *en route*. The increased time is presumably required to ensure that the standards of carpentry are satisfactory. Is this what is meant by "hammer and tongs"?

PHILIP WILKS
Public Relations Officer
Central Rail Users' Consultative Committee
London EC2

Mistaken identity

Sir: It was good of Peter Popham to clear me of the charge of membership of the Socialist Workers Party (31 March) but, to my knowledge, he is the first person ever to have raised such a bizarre suggestion in the first place.

For the record, I am also not a regular contributor to *Tribune* and nor is my book *The Enemy Within* a biography of Arthur Scargill – it is an account of the role played by M15 during and after the 1984-85 miners' strike.
SEUMAS MILNE
Labour Editor, The Guardian
London EC1

Woodshed waste

Sir: If Sara Maitland ("I finally found my MP in the woodshed", 31 March) has really lived somewhere for almost five years without even knowing what her constituency is, maybe she should have paid closer attention to the document on which she registered to vote last October. Assuming she didn't just throw that piece of paper, unread, into the woodshed too.
D RUSSELL
St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex

essay

May all our tax rises be green

The next government could have all the extra revenue it needs and improve the environment at the same time, argues Nicholas Schoon

March, 2002, and Tony Blair is about to announce the election date. Labour has a narrow poll lead. His justification for a new mandate is keeping income taxes down and the economy in reasonable health while allowing moderate but real expansion in health care, education and public transport.

Five years earlier this rosy scenario seemed inconceivable. Pundits said Labour's 1997 campaign tax pledges surely had to be lies. But they weren't. Neither income tax, national insurance nor VAT have been raised since then. But in 2002 new or increased "green" taxes, which barely had a mention during the 1997 campaign, are raising an extra £16bn a year.

The money, equivalent to 1.2p in the pound on income tax, was badly needed for the key public services the voters

demanded. One year's real growth of 3 per cent in the NHS (the bare minimum needed to cope with rising demand) costs £1.5bn. But there are downsides. Farmers infuriated by the fertiliser and pesticide taxes have gridlocked central London with tractors. The recent closure of an oil refinery in an unemployment blackspot is blamed on ecotaxation. The real price of petrol has risen 50 per cent in five years and Tory hoardings shout about Labour's "great green rip-off".

But the ecotaxation reforms have slashed pollution and are estimated to have created nearly 100,000 jobs – a further huge help to the public finances. They have helped Britain to build the low-energy, minimum-material industries of the future. A decisive shift in motorising taxation in favour of high-fuel-efficiency cars, combined with the UK's strong international competitiveness, has prompted

two of the big six manufacturers to plan production lines for ultra-light, 70 miles per gallon cars.

Could this happen? It seems highly unlikely here and now in 1997. This year Gordon Brown, the shadow chancellor, said: "Work is something to be rewarded through the tax system, whereas environmental pollution is something that should be discouraged." But he and other leading Labour figures have grave doubts about ecotaxation reform, especially about making fuel more expensive.

Before trying to help them, let us summarise the ecotaxation story so far. Environmental taxes make the companies and/or consumers causing pollution pay for the costs they impose on society as a whole – such as the extra health-care charges due to bad air quality. It is impossible to work out exactly what these costs are but

imposing some level of tax on pollution signifies society's disapproval, causes noxious and toxic emissions to be cut and diverts resources into less polluting enterprises. Some or all of the tax revenue can be used to encourage non-polluting alternatives or environmental repair work. Furthermore, taxes and incentives are a better way of making industry cut pollution than are regulations and emission limits, because they allow business greater freedom of action.

Green tax reform encourages companies to innovate for a global future which, in an increasingly crowded and resource-depleted world, will belong to high-efficiency, low-waste enterprises. And if most of the money raised by the new taxes is used to cut the costs of employment then ecotaxation will create new jobs. This is the conclusion of several studies that used computer models to project how ecotax reform would effect the UK economy.

The latest, by the left-leaning Institute of Public Policy Research using Cambridge Econometrics' model, found that a particular package of green taxes introduced now could raise £10bn a year in 2000 and create 252,000 extra jobs by then, two-thirds of them full-time, if the extra revenue was used to cut employers' National Insurance Contributions (NICs).

The real economy is too complex for us to know how many jobs would be created by various green tax reforms. In the short

term jobs would be shed by companies harmed by them. Many, perhaps most, of the new jobs created in the longer term by lowered employment taxes would be low-pay, low-skill ones. It seems a safe bet that provided the taxes are not draconian and are carefully planned and the revenues are used correctly the economic bad cannot outweigh the good, while the environment must gain.

That is why Sweden, Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands have introduced ecotax reforms, while Britain has begun to follow. In 1987 higher duty was placed on leaded than unleaded petrol to boost sales of the latter. Since then we have had 8 per cent VAT imposed on domestic fuel, duty on road fuels rising by 5 per cent a year and the introduction of a £7 a

tonne tax on garbage dumping. Were the Tories to win power we might have more; the party's separate "green" manifesto promises consultation on a water pollution tax. The Liberal Democrats are real enthusiasts. They have pledged to slash the price of a tax disc for cars with emissions below 160gpc from £145 to £10 in order to boost the market for smaller, more fuel-efficient cars. A 4p-a-litre increase in fuel duty would make up for the lost revenues. The third party is also proposing a carbon tax on fossil fuels to cut emis-

sions of climate-changing carbon dioxide gas. The revenue raised would be used to cut VAT and reduce employers' NICs.

But Labour is silent, apart from emphatically ruling out a carbon tax and pledging to cut VAT on energy to 5 per cent when gas and electricity prices are already falling. This would encourage comfortably-off people to use energy less carefully, causing more pollution. Gas and electricity are already cheap – their real price (once inflation has been accounted for, and after taking VAT into account) is cheaper than at any time in the last 17 years.

Labour's big problem with

Green tax reform encourages companies to innovate for a global future and, if used to cut the costs of employment, creates jobs

sions. The worst-off fifth of households spend 12 per cent of their budget on fuel, the richest fifth just 4 per cent.

There are, however, ways of dealing with this unfairness. In the Netherlands, for example, there is a carbon tax but every household is given a basic, tax-free allowance of domestic energy per annum. You could drastically beef up the Government's low-key programme for insulating the homes of the fuel-poor. This is something Labour is already committed to, using money raised by its windfall tax on the utilities. Or you could pump some of the revenues raised by fossil-fuel taxes into the benefits system to compensate those hardest hit.

There are a few golden rules for harmonious ecotaxation reform. Explain exactly what environmental goal you are trying to achieve. earmark the revenue for something which has widespread support, such as cutting employment taxes or improving public transport. Give advance warning of your intentions, consult widely and be prepared to make changes. Use at least some of the money raised to help people or industry cope with the tax while they are curbing pollution and waste.

The Conservative government failed to follow these rules

in trying to raise VAT on domestic fuel from zero to 17.5 per cent in two years. It ran into a serious Parliamentary rebellion and only got 8 per cent. When it came to its next ecotax, the garbage-dumping levy introduced last October, it had learned all the lessons. The money this will raise, some £400m a year, has been earmarked for a small cut in employers' NICs (encouraging job creation) and for schemes which cut waste and improve old dump sites (helping the environment).

Any government that follows these rules will still encounter intensive lobbying from companies and interest groups hurt by ecotaxes. And of course environmental taxes are no public sector finance panacea. The more successful they are at curbing pollution, the less money they raise for government. But ecotax reform is a great opportunity there for the taking. One of the best things Gordon Brown could do in his first couple of months as Chancellor would be to set up an ecotax commission tasked to make recommendations by the year's end. It ought to include business people, trade unionists, representatives of low-income groups and local councils as well as the economists and environmentalists who have made most of the running on ecotaxation so far. Environmental tax reforms could be introduced without injustice and with public support. But the party most likely to govern hasn't even started trying.



Albanian children face food crisis

Confusion and chaos are mounting in Albania. According to Albanian government reports, food stocks are down to a tenth of normal levels. Those least able to help themselves will, as ever, be most at risk. Children's hospitals and orphanages do not know where the next food supplies will come from.

UK charity Children's Aid Direct, formerly Feed the Children (Europe), has considerable experience of working in Albania and has a team on the ground. As soon as it is safe to deliver food and other urgently needed aid, this charity will make those deliveries. And they are appealing today for your help to do it.

A donation of £30 could buy enough high-protein food for 136 children. As the crisis deepens, Children's Aid Direct will be doing what they can – will you?

LET ME HELP BRING HOPE TO ALBANIA

Here is my gift of: £30 ☐ £60 ☐ £90 ☐ £250* ☐ £ (other)

*A gift of £250 or more is worth almost an extra third to us under Gift Aid

Please make your cheque payable to Children's Aid Direct OR Please debit £ from my

☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Switch card number

Last three digits of Switch card no. Switch issue no.

EXPIRY DATE / SIGNATURE

NAME (CAPS) MR/MRS/MS

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

TELEPHONE

OR please phone our donation line 0990 600 610

Please send to: Children's Aid Direct,

Dept No. 516

FREEPOST, Reading RG1 1BR.

Children's Aid Direct

Registered Charity No. 803238

22 easy steps to a better Britain

It has always struck me as unfair that the main political parties put out manifestos at election time and nobody else does. Why should politicians think that what they have to say is more interesting than what the rest of us have to say? There are far more of the rest of us than there are of the politicians, for a start.

So to get the ball rolling and to help reverse this trend, I am today issuing my manifesto for the 1 May 1997 general election. Note, too, that the promises in my manifesto do not depend on my being elected. I shall carry out these pledges whatever happens.

Here goes, then. I, being of sound mind and fully conscious of what I am doing, do hereby pledge, with the coming general election in mind, that:

1. I shall refuse to watch any so-called television debate between two, three or more party leaders, on the grounds that I have once or twice seen Prime Minister's Question Time and know what the level of debate is already.

2. In any case, I shall not watch John Major again

unless he has cured himself of that maddening habit of leaning cockily on one elbow on the dispatch box, as if he were the pub bore laying down the law – which, of course, on a national level he is.

3. I shall do my best to avoid all news bulletins about the election on the grounds that they do not contain news.

4. I shall do my best to avoid all news bulletins about the election on the grounds that they do not contain news. I shall do my best to avoid all news bulletins about the election on the grounds that they do not contain news.

5. And if anyone can spot why that is the leading item of news on Mr Blair's supposedly news-conscious BBC on a Tuesday morning, and not just the result of some programme editor saying, "Well, I suppose we had better kick off with something about the election, even though absolutely nothing has happened", I would like to hear from them.

6. Failing which, I shall shudder to think of the promise of the BBC's 24-hour rolling news service, on

the grounds that there doesn't seem to be enough news to fill the slots they have got at the moment.

7. Yes, well, getting back to the election, I shall undertake not to use any of the following phrases in casual conversation:

12. "Yes, but what about 'proportional representation'?"

13. "Yes, but..."

14. "Yes, but..."

15. I shall undertake not to buy any party political manifesto, on the grounds that they contain promises which are designed to get people elected, not promises to be carried out, and party manifestos are therefore no higher up the evolutionary scale than advertisements, which one is not normally expected to buy with one's own money, and the only reason I would buy a manifesto is to keep on my person so that when people say, "But does anyone ever actually buy a manifesto?" Has anyone ever seen one?" I would stun the company by producing one with a flourish.

16. I shall undertake not to go along with the BBC's lame pretence that the election campaign is just getting under way (see Pledge No 4), when we all know it has been going on for years and we have all been dying to get the election over and done with for at least a year.

17. I shall undertake to be very surprised indeed if I get a visit from any canvasser or

MP in my constituency, on the grounds that I never got a letter from the PM and I never got a call from the people undertaking to return my TV set to Channel 5, although I have to admit that the dustbin collection in my area is very good, which will come in useful if I do get any election leaflets or manifestos or letters from the PM.

18. I undertake not to make up my mind which way to vote until I have listened to and ignored the arguments on all sides.

19. I undertake not to make up my mind until I actually go into the polling station.

20. I undertake not to make up my mind even then.

21. I undertake to come out of the polling station saying to the officials, "Quite frankly, I don't like the look of any of them at the moment, so I'll come back later before polling stops."

22. But I undertake not to come back later before polling stops.

This being an election manifesto, I shall feel free to break any of the pledges contained therein at any time.

Miles Kington

the grounds that there doesn't seem to be enough news to fill the slots they have got at the moment.

7. Yes, well, getting back to the election, I shall undertake not to use any of the following phrases in casual conversation:

8. "Looks pretty neck and neck, doesn't it?"

9. "One lot is as bad as another, if you ask me."

10. "Yes, but where are they going to get the money from?"

11. "Yes, but what about Europe?"

Beware the prophets of the economic miracle

Britain is booming? Or Britain deserves better? Both main parties are tumbling over themselves in their eagerness to promise that the UK's long slide down the world economic league table either has been, or soon will be, halted. That the national shame of being beaten by one small country or ex-colony after another in the prosperity stakes, making the English cricket team's record look positively enviable, will be a thing of the past.

But if any of us is taken in by politicians' claims and counter-claims about how much their policies can boost the nation's wealth, we will be victims of our own innumeracy. Mature economies cannot achieve big increases in their trend rate of growth, and small increases take a generation to make a noticeable difference. It is a sham to pretend that with higher investment or better schooling or lower business taxes or deregulation of the workplace - pick your panacea - Britain could grow even half as fast as the "tiger" economies of South-east Asia.

They are truly in a different league. Those countries have been catching up from an undeveloped and under-industrialised starting point. Most of their headlong expansion is down to a fast-growing labour force and to investment that rapidly boosts the stock of factories and machinery from a very small base.

This is exactly the path that Japan forged earlier. Like Japan, whose growth rate has slowed to less than 2 per cent a year in the 1990s from rates of around 8 per cent a year in the 1960s, they will eventually mature and slow down.

Small economies can grow much faster than big ones. The real puzzle is not the tiger "miracle", but rather why there are some poor countries (such as Egypt or Turkey, Colombia, or most countries in sub-Saharan Africa) that have not managed the catch-up.

The big, industrial economies are much of a muchness. For all of them - Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the UK and US - there was a post-war golden age, the 30 glorious years from 1945. Since 1975, average growth of real national output per person has slowed in each of them. Britain has performed a bit worse than the average but almost the same as Germany. In terms of growth in real GDP per head since the mid-1970s (The German catch-up and overtaking happened earlier.)

This interesting and little-known fact is what puts paid to the politicians' boasts. If I had a pound for every time Gordon Brown has mentioned the need to increase investment to boost the sustainable growth rate or Michael Heseltine has said British competitiveness is forging ahead, it would make a handy contribution to my own prosperity; after all, higher investment or improved competitiveness certainly aren't going to do the trick quickly.

A higher rate of investment in Germany than in the UK for 25 years has not made a jot of difference to the rate at which output per head has increased. Germany has gained a bit on the investment savings, but has lost a bit on the efficiency with which its companies have used their greater amount of plant and equipment. Britain



Diane Coyle

'Vote for us and Britain will boom', or 'Britain is booming so vote for us', they say. But, in reality, the best they can do is try not to make big mistakes

has leaner and meaner companies, if you like, but they have less to work with. It can't have hurt Germany to have had a healthier investment record, but it hasn't helped a lot either.

The fact that despite their vigorous efforts for more than a quarter of a century to alter the course of the economy the politicians have had so little effect suggests that the best they can do in terms of economic policy is avoid making mistakes. It also means that we should be sceptical about any claim to have found a miracle cure to Britain's economic problems - it will turn out to be snake oil for an imaginary complaint.

Let us give Messrs Clarke and Brown the benefit of the doubt and accept that the next government can pull off an impressive improvement in Britain's comparative economic performance - or that the last one has already done so - and Britain's long-term growth trend improves by a quarter, from about 2 per cent to 2.5 per cent a year.

This is a tall order. One way to achieve this permanently high growth trend would be for investment to start increasing more than twice as fast on average as it has during the past 20 years, by 5 per cent rather than 2 per cent a year. Another way would be to have the equivalent of a consumer boom every year, with consumer spending growing at an average rate of more than 4 per cent. We should just make the pace this year, with the help of tax cuts and the windfall of free building society shares.

This puts into context what appear to be quite modest claims about the possibility of improving growth. That extra half percentage point doesn't sound much, but it is a small fraction of a big number. But just suppose it can be done. And suppose that Germany, rather than doing a bit better than us on average, will do significantly worse and expand by only 2 per cent a year. As the average Briton starts only about two-thirds as well off as the average west German, even with this mini-economic miracle we would not catch up until the second half of the next century.

The iron laws of growth that I mean that, until our children are adults in their prime, the GDP of mature economies is so big that it can not expand at a much faster pace without unimaginably big increases in the growth rate.

This doesn't mean that there is no point in trying to improve the long-term performance of the economy. There is now a fair degree of agreement about how to avoid policy mistakes - that is why Labour and the Conservatives are speaking with one voice about keeping inflation low and reducing government borrowing, although the Government looks to have suspended its prudence for the duration of the election campaign. It is why Labour would not reverse Tory deregulation in favour of a return to interventionism.

If there is a chance of improving on not getting it wrong, the next generation will appreciate it. Of course policy-makers should strive for healthy levels of investment and greater efficiency. They should also ditch the empty slogans and come clean about how little their efforts can achieve.

Where it's hip to speak Spanglish

by David Usborne

It is Thursday night at the Nuyorican Poets' Cafe and Aladdin, a stand-up comic, is picking on the white guy in the third row who has four attractive girls in tow and a cocky air. "Hey, you, down there, Larry Flynn," he jibes, evoking the infamous publisher of *Hustler*. "You are a regular *papi chulo*." The line is a good one because the panthers instantly erupt. But Larry's face is all confusion. Pardon?

Seeing that a good half of his audience are Hispanics, Aladdin is spicing his gig with a shot of Spanish. (*Papi chulo*, roughly translated, is playboy.) More accurately, he is sliding into a dialect that, for the rest of us - the non-Spanish speakers in the house - is at once familiar and infuriatingly obscure.

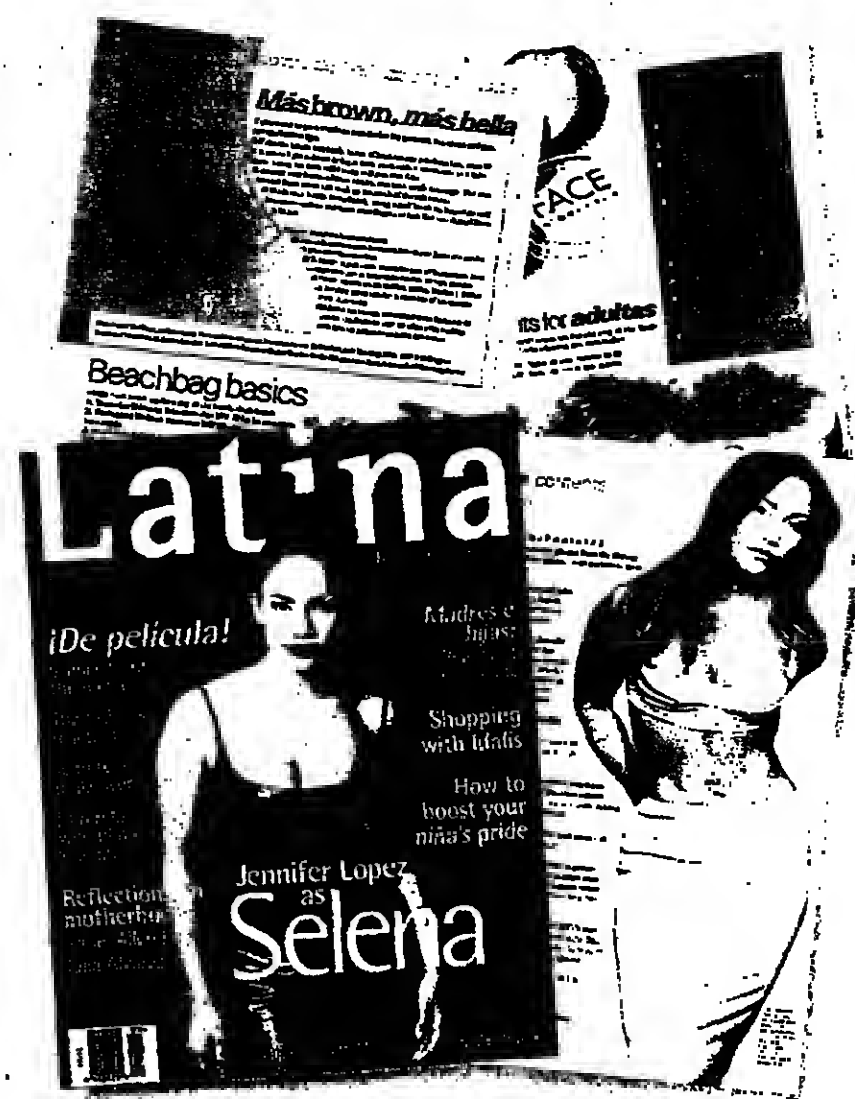
Welcome to Spanglish, secret third language of New York for which there are no handy Berlitz dictionaries nor any professional interpreters, not even at the United Nations. Think "Franglish" to understand the principle involved - an irreverent merging of two quite different tongues - but imagine a progeny that, far from being an ugly duckling, is efficient, alluring and often funny. It is Spanish without the tongue-twisting verbs and it is English *con* romance and rhythm. *Que brilliant!* No? Si.

Aladdin is on a roll. Next he lampoons Frank Purdue, King of the American chicken breast, who, unadvisedly, stars in his own ads on Spanish-language cable TV here. (The south-eastern Mr Purdue is about as close to being Hispanic as haggis is to a Madrid ham.) "Si usted *comprare mis pollas* (if you buy my chickens)," mocks Aladdin, "yo *becomo* muy rico (I get to be jolly rich)." Up front, however, Larry is restless. Much more of this Spanglish and he is going to become *mucho* bored.

Spanglish - known as *Tex-Mex* in southern Texas and *Cubonics* in the Cuban enclaves of Miami - takes many forms. It can be a straightforward Spanish-English blend, where sentences can begin, say, in English and end in Spanish. But it can also be more complex, jammed with words that are themselves confections created by the collision of the two original languages. Verbs are often derived from English (maybe because they are shorter, like "becomo") but can be conjugated as if in Spanish.

"Nuyorican" is an elision meaning New York Puerto Rican. The café, which was founded 20 years ago as a haven for struggling Latino writers and performers, is located in Manhattan's "Loisaida" (Lower East Side).

That sort of Spanglish-English pidgin should have evolved here is not a surprise.



Far from being an ugly duckling, New York's third language is efficient, alluring and often funny

Spanish speakers already make up 11 per cent of the US population; according to the latest census projections, one out of four Americans will be Hispanic in 2040. As millions of Hispanics arrived in America in the Fifties and Sixties - from the Caribbean and Latin America - they found themselves adrift between languages and cultures. They, and even more so their children, had to adapt. In the great melting pot, cultural identities inevitably leach into one another. So do languages. "It is a culture clash and right there, with Spanglish, you have a metaphor for what is going on," explains Aladdin, whose own parents settled in Spanish Harlem, though they were themselves from

Bangladesh. "These are the first generation Americans who have been bought up to assimilate with society around them while trying to communicate with parents born in Spanish-speaking countries." Millie Pena, a 44-year-old who came from Cuba 30 years ago, agrees. "Even my name is Spanglish," she laughs, confessing she was christened Milagros (Miracle). "At home, with my children, we speak Spanglish all the time. I think it is partly because we speak so fast and sometimes an English word is just easier." If Ms Pena, who has a cookware business, wants her daughter to pass the kitchen mop, the full Spanish version should be: "Tráeme el palo de trapear". What she will actually

say is "Traeme el mop". No one has suggested imparting any special respectability on Spanglish by, for instance, trying to elevate it into a curriculum language in the way some black American educators tried last year to elevate so-called Ebonics as the tongue of African Americans. By contrast, as the growth of Spanglish becomes more apparent, some voices of protest are starting to make themselves heard. The fact of Spanglish and its popularity is recognised.

however, by the commercial world. Spanglish is spoken by Hispanic television presenters and radio DJs, chanted by rap singers and liberally used by advertisers looking to penetrate the Hispanic communities. It has been the inspiration for several new glossy magazines. There is *Generación 13* in Miami, New York has *Latina*.

Launched last June as a bi-monthly, *Latina* is aimed at young Latinos concerned with fashion, beauty and sex. "Magazine Bilingüe" it says on the cover. Inside, stories are printed primarily in English with summaries in Spanish, but Spanglish abounds, especially in the headlines. "Finger paints for adults," begins one beauty segment; another, on tanning, is tagged "Mas brown, mas bella". (More brown, more beautiful.)

Christy Haubegger, *Latina*'s 28-year-old publisher, is an unabashed fan of Spanglish and says she speaks it all the time in the magazine's offices. "People use it when they want to express emotions or just because it's fun. And it also helps Latinos to preserve their identity. It is a coping mechanism that is emblematic of the fact that we have had to bridge two cultures, two languages and two sets of values."

Ms Haubegger, who was born to a Mexican hut adopted by first generation German-Americans, has not escaped the wrath of the purists. They tend to be older Hispanics - first generation immigrants - for whom Spanglish is an affront. Among them also are academics such as Roberto González Echevarría, a professor of Hispanic studies at Yale University.

Assailing Spanglish on the comment pages of the *New York Times*, he suggested that it "poses a grave danger to Hispanic culture and to the advancement of Hispanics in mainstream America. Those who condone and even promote it as a harmless commingling do not realise that this is hardly a relationship based on equality. Spanglish is an invasion of Spanish by English." And if Spanglish were to spread into Latin America, he warns, it would amount to "the ultimate imperialistic takeover".

But at *Latina*, Ms Haubegger is unrepentant. "A lot of people think that we are advocating the bastardisation of not just English, or of Spanish but of both them. We are not advocating it, we are reflecting what is out there and addressing our readers in the way they address each other. And a bit of time that is in Spanglish."

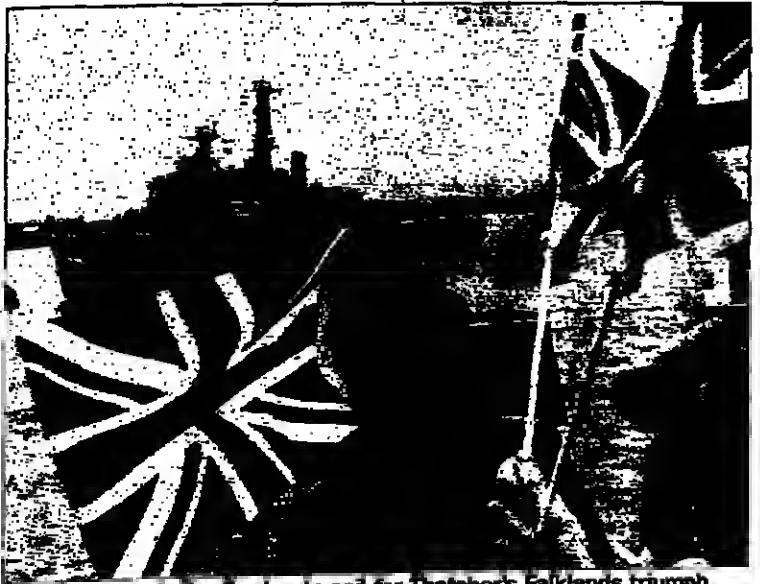
Richard Gott listens for what the parties have to say on international affairs - and finds silence

A British foreign policy? Forget it

In the small print of the election campaign few people seem to have noticed that the major parties advocate the abolition of the Foreign Office. That, at least, is the conclusion one must draw from the almost total absence at the hustings of any discussion about foreign affairs. Politicians obviously think it would be just as well if the Foreign Office were not there, and doubtless a lot of money could be saved by getting rid of it.

The Conservative position is clear. Mrs Thatcher never liked or trusted the institution, and indeed tried to set up one of her own. The detailed investigations contained in the Scott Report did little to improve its reputation - except for duplicity, opacity, and being economical with the truth.

Labour, never one to step out of line, presumably shares this view, with the added bonus that if there was an Foreign Office there would be no job for Robin Cook. With no Cold War, no obvious foreign enemy, and an apathetic electorate, why bother to have a Foreign Office at all? Why not take a leaf out of the book of the former Soviet foreign minister, Leon Trotsky, who said he would make a few declarations and then shut up shop.



Into the sunset: the fleet sets sail for Thatcher's Falklands triumph

Royal Yacht remains a contentious party-political issue. As every history student is almost certainly well aware, no election has been fought on a foreign policy issue since 1857. In a forgotten and unnecessary election, Lord Palmerston roundly defeated the radical enthusiasts of the Manchester School, Richard Cobden and John Bright. They had foolishly argued that it would be an error to have another war with China. There have never been any British votes in standing up for Johnny Foreigner. That is the accepted wisdom, and so things have remained ever since. In the current campaign, there is of course an endless diet of meaty-mouthed words about Europe, which would need the army of unemployed

kremlinologists to decipher. But about the great outside world beyond, the politicians and their spin doctors are keeping mum. Look at the current headlines. Do we support President Mobutu or Laurent Kabila? Silence. Where do we stand on the use of British mercenaries in Papua New Guinea? Deafening silence. Do we go along with Islamic democracy in Turkey, or would we prefer a secular military coup? Search me, would we like to see more Israeli settlements on the West Bank, or fewer? No idea. Do we want to testify before the UN committee on the rights of Nato further to the east? Too complicated. Will we still need to be nice to the Chinese when we have finally out loose the albatross of Hong Kong?

Never given it a thought. Should we be friends or enemies with our nearest neighbour, the Republic of Ireland, when the peace process is finally admitted to have ground to a halt? Don't know. And when attention focuses on Albania, might we not discuss whether we are in favour of the Tooks or the Ghegs? And answer came there none.

During the entire campaign we shall hear nothing of these issues. Yet they will not go away just because no one is looking. History also tells us that a newly elected prime minister, once in government, soon finds much of his or her time caught up in the minutiae of foreign affairs - for better or sometimes for worse. Neville Chamberlain was a splendid minister of health, yet he is remembered for his inexperience in the world of foreign policy. His aide de camp, Sir Horace Wilson, was a brilliant labour negotiator, but rather less skilled when it came to European diplomacy.

Mrs Thatcher was also caught up in subjects that were not within her existing sphere of expertise. With her heart set on mundane local business like dismantling the power of the unions or reorganising education, she found herself struggling on the world stage almost by accident - stiffening Western resistance in the Gulf, frightening the Russians, and fighting a small war in the Falklands.

So it will be if Tony Blair were to become prime minister. However much he has pledged to pay attention to things at home, he will, within weeks of taking office, be seized of the importance of the outside world. He will be seen jetting off to great international gatherings in Amsterdam and Madrid, and hosting important meetings with foreign leaders at home.

These will not be cosy parochial encounters discussing hygiene in the beef industry or the price of Brussels sprouts. They will be serious negotiations about foreign affairs, attempting to put what was once proudly thought of as "an independent foreign policy" into a larger international pool, arguing with people who are supposed to be friends and allies about the attitude of Europe and Nato to the problems of the world beyond.

That is the dimension that is missing from all election debate. What, in the formation of Europe's foreign policy, will be the arguments of Britain? Missing too is any discussion about the future of tried and tested warhorses like the United Nations and the Commonwealth, institutions that were largely ignored and distrusted in the Conservative era. Has our interest withered forever?

Maybe, although no one dares to talk about such things, there should still be an argument about the future of the Foreign Office itself. What exactly are all those toffie-posed diplomats really there for? And just how good are they at what they perceive to be their job? To a disinterested observer it might seem that the Foreign Office now only exists to disguise and cover up the inexperience of the political class when it comes to handling the problems of the outside world. With the assumed and in effect enforced disinterest of the electorate, it has become natural for politicians to turn to the advice and the alleged expertise of people who still perceive themselves as heirs to an imperial and inhuman tradition. Maybe that compounds the problem. That such questions should be raised during an election campaign is obviously too much to ask.

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FTSE tumbles in wake of Wall Street volatility

Tom Stevenson
London
David Osborne
New York

Equities tumbled yesterday as the worst two-day performance on Wall Street since 1987, the fear of rising interest rates on both sides of the Atlantic and the election raised fears that the past two years' bull run in shares had finally run out of steam.

The FTSE 100 index of leading shares, which fell 112 points

in early trading, closed 64.8 points lower at 4243.1. This was its second-largest fall this year after another volatile session on Wall Street gave investors little hope that the 300-point fall in the two trading sessions around the Easter break had run its course. Morning trading in New York yesterday saw the Dow bounce around between plus 37 and minus 36 points.

Yesterday's fall in London, which follows a rise of almost 40 per cent in the UK market since the beginning of 1995, came as

no surprise to dealers who had been forced to watch events in America from the sidelines during the Easter weekend. But having wiped out a quarter of Footsie's 4.7 per cent rise so far this year in one session, the fall left traders cautious about immediate prospects.

"There are quite a few things we need to get out of the way before we can have a crack at breaking new highs," HSBC said James Capel's strategist, Robert Buckland. "We need to get the election out of the way

in the UK, and we'll have to see more numbers from the US to see if there will need to be more medicine in the form of higher interest rates."

Others felt the attack on UK shares, which wiped £190 off the value of the market at one stage, was inevitable but nonetheless harsh. "The UK market is taking a beating on the back of Wall Street, and it's a beating we don't necessarily deserve," said Simon Smith at Birmingham broker Albert E Sharp.

Wall Street aside, the biggest fear was that last week's quarter-point increase in US base rates was only the first of many such rises. "The reality is that this is the first of a series of rate rises in the US and the markets are readjusting to reflect that," said Martin Lupton, head of global equity trading at Dresdner Kleinwort Benson. At home, rates are expected to rise whichever party wins the election at the beginning of May.

In America, a degree of calm was restored to Wall Street yesterday as stocks steadied after two straight sessions on Monday and last Thursday of precipitous losses.

In spite of a fresh crop of strong economic news, the Dow Jones industrial average entered positive territory in morning trading after dipping 30 points straight after the opening bell. Wall Street none the less remains on edge as investors wait to see if New York stocks have suffered only a one-off correction that is now over or whether a longer-term bear trend is under way.

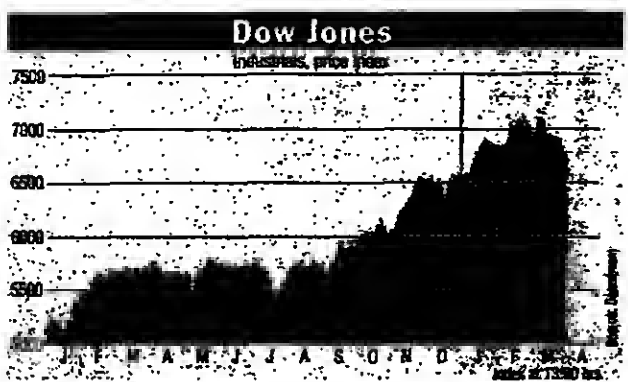
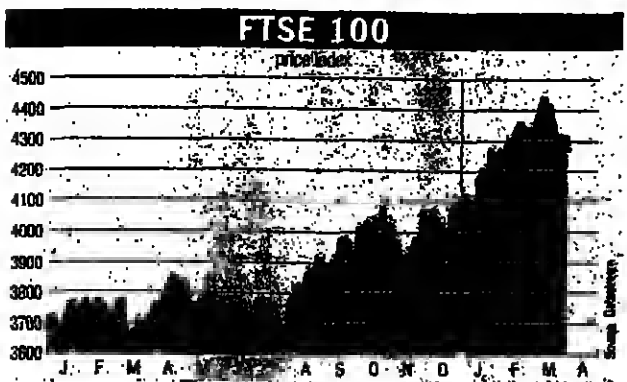
A significant factor is likely to be the role of the US multi-fund, which this week reported an unexpectedly poor performance, in value-gain terms, for the first quarter of the year. The average gain for the funds was a mere 2 per cent, the weakest in two years.

Confirming the continuing strength of the US economy, the Conference Board reported a 0.5 per cent jump in its index of leading economic indicators to 103.5—the biggest such increase in a year.

The National Association of Purchasing Management, meanwhile, reported an increase in manufacturing output in March that was the highest for two years.

In London, almost a tenth of the FTSE 100's fall was attributable to just one share, BT. The 17.5p fall to 428p wiped more than 6.5 points from the index.

Market report, page 23



Industrial output still growing

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

There were strong gains in industrial output and orders in March, according to a survey which showed manufacturing expanding for the tenth month running.

Separate figures indicated a big jump in house prices last month. Halifax Building Society reported that a 1 per cent increase during the month had raised the annual rate of house price inflation to 7.2 per cent.

The pace of growth in manufacturing was weaker in March than the previous month, according to the purchasing managers' index, mainly because of a fall in manufacturing employment. Output rose at a

somewhat slower pace than in February, but total orders picked up more rapidly despite weaker growth in export orders.

Peter Thomson, director general of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply, said: "It's heartening that despite the strength of the pound, order books are still growing."

But a survey by the Engineering Employers Federation reported that its heavily export-dependent members were suffering from the effects of the strong pound. Despite a pick-up in Continental markets, engineers' export orders fell sharply during the latest three months.

Economists said yesterday's survey results would make no difference to the interest rate debate. "The purchasing man-

agers' index has stayed in the same range for six months. I'm of the view that interest rates do not need to go up, and this hasn't changed my mind," said Simon Briscoe at Nikko Europe.

The majority view in the City is that interest rates will need to rise, but this is due to rapid growth in the service industries rather than manufacturing. A new purchasing managers' survey for services, due to be published tomorrow, will attract more attention.

"Figures for service sector activity generally are much stronger," said Michael Saunders at Salomon Brothers, predicting a half or three-quarter point rise in base rates shortly after the election.

Yesterday's house price figures confirmed the picture of a buoyant consumer economy, although the Halifax cautioned that prices were fluctuating from month to month.

The recovery was "still only at a modest pace, with no indication of the boom conditions of the late Eighties," it said.

Yesterday's manufacturing activity index fell slightly from 53.4 in February to 52.9 last month, remaining well above the dividing line of 50 between expansion and recession.

There was a strong rise in output, although again slightly less than February's. Stocks of finished goods fell thanks to sales in excess of output, but new orders climbed at a faster pace than the previous month.

Tadpole shares suspended as it fails to produce accounts

Nigel Cope

The problems at Tadpole Technology escalated yesterday when shares in the former glamour stock were suspended after it failed to produce its annual report and accounts.

Shares in the computer group, which stood at 423p in 1994, were suspended at 23.5p following discussions with the Stock Exchange. Under Exchange rules a company must produce its annual accounts within six months of the end of its financial year. Tadpole's financial year runs until 30 September, which gave it to the end

of last week to deliver the accounts.

Tadpole's finance director, Bob Booth, said yesterday that the publication of the group's accounts had been delayed "while a transaction was put in place".

It is understood that this relates to a re-financing as the group seeks a return to profit. The company, chaired by Richard King, is not thought to be in any talks that may lead to an offer. But the new funding is expected to be in place by the end of the month. Tadpole reported reduced losses of £4.4m in the year to September, down from £10m the previous year.

Under its new chief executive, Bernard Hulme, Tadpole is returning to its original brief as a specialist equipment manufacturer rather than notebook computers.

At its preliminary results announcement in November Mr Hulme said that the combination of Tadpole's engineering expertise with the marketing knowledge of well established partners would, "given the appropriate funding", enable Tadpole to realise its potential.

Tadpole has proved one of the most volatile stocks in the technology sector in recent years. Floated at 65p in 1992 the

shares tripled in 10 days fuelled by its plans to produce the world's most powerful notebook computer. The shares hit 423p at the end of 1994 but began to slide almost immediately after a profits warning relating to delays to its much vaunted P1000 computer.

As the shares continued to slide the company brought in a new chief executive to replace its 35-year-old founder, George Grey. Tadpole has since said its mistake was to try to take on the computer giants such as Compaq and Toshiba when it lacked sufficient marketing muscle. It has scrapped the Pentium-



Richard King: Seeking a return to profit at Tadpole

based notebook computer to concentrate on selling technology to the communications and network computing industries.

The company has said it does not expect to record a profit until the 1997/98 financial year. It has not made a profit since 1994.

Alan Sugar 'passes go and collects £80m'



End of the line: Alan Sugar said Amstrad had taken Dancall as far as it could

Amstrad sells mobile phone firm to Bosch

Patrick Toohy

Alan Sugar yesterday lived up to his reputation as a consummate deal-maker by selling Dancall, Amstrad's mobile phone business, to Robert Bosch, the privately-owned German electronics giant, for £92m. The price represents a return of almost six times on Amstrad's investment in loss-making Dancall in just three-and-a-half years.

"This is a real Houdini act," said one veteran Amstrad follower. "To get out of the commodity hand-held mobile phone market, pass go and collect £80m is stupendous."

Shares in Amstrad closed 21.5p higher at 221.5p, valuing the company at £262m and Mr Sugar's 35 per cent stake at £92m.

"Amstrad felt it had taken Dancall as far as it could," Mr Sugar said. "Realistically the Amstrad philosophy has not lent itself to running a business in the long term."

Since Dancall was bought for £6.3m from the receivers in 1993 Amstrad has invested £10m, but the company remained in the red in the face of cut-throat price competition for digital handsets from the likes of Nokia and Motorola.

Mr Sugar said interest in Dancall increased last year after merger talks between Amstrad and rival consumer electronics group Pison collapsed. Interest intensified after Dancall launched what it claimed was the world's first truly international cellular mobile phone at a trade fair in Hannover last month.

"The virtues and potential of Dancall have never been fully appreciated by the shareholders or the financial institutions," Mr Sugar said.

Andreas Nobis, a board member of Bosch, said the German group would retain the entire workforce of Dancall and would increase its plant capacity to over 2 million telephones a year.

Analysts said plans to return

some of the cash raised from the sale to investors confirmed suspicions that Mr Sugar, who tried to take Amstrad private five years ago, was slowly liquidating the company.

At the end of December Amstrad had a cash pile of £112m and following the Dancall deal it will be left with Vigen, which sells computers direct to the public, and a 66 per cent stake in Betacom, the consumer electronics subsidiary.

Analysts are concerned about where Amstrad's next blockbuster product is coming from. There is talk of a user-friendly Internet browser being developed while Amstrad is in line to share in a £500m order for BSkyB's digital set-top boxes.

Amstrad, a former FTSE 100 company, was a darling of the stock market in the late Eighties. But the company slipped into heavy losses in the Nineties as recession and an influx of new competitors drove computer prices down.

Comment, page 21

Marks & Spencer tries on clothes by mail order

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

Marks & Spencer is to expand its home shopping operation with the introduction of clothing catalogues from spring next year. The expansion is the latest in a series of moves by UK retailers and mail-order companies to expand their services as consumers shop increasingly in shopping from home.

The company will start regional trials featuring select

ranges of adult clothing next year. It has developed a successful business delivering home furnishings, flowers, hampers and wine direct to customers' homes. Last year the business recorded total sales of £85m.

M&S said it was expanding the service in response to customer demands. "There are some customers who like to have the option of purchasing goods from home as well as visiting the stores," a spokeswoman said.

The group already sells business clothing from a catalogue and started a regional trial of school clothing last year. This will be expanded to a national campaign later this year.

It is not clear which region will be targeted for the adult clothing trial. M&S has also said it will be any delivery charge. However, the goods will be the same ranges as those available in the stores. The company said the catalogue would enable customers who shopped at smaller stores to

gain access to a wider product selection.

M&S already has an ordering and warehouse facility in Warrington which will handle the orders. The company will also be recruiting extra staff for the mail order operation though it declined to say how many.

City analysts welcomed the move, adding that it was no surprise. Tony Shirret at BZW said: "It's a good move and will give M&S the chance to access customers in a different way as well as offering them a wider range."

However, there are potential dangers. It is possible that catalogue sales will cannibalise sales from M&S stores. Analysts said the retailer will have to be careful to avoid bad debts.

But M&S has had a charge card for years and now has 5 million members. It has also been running a successful financial services operation offering personal loans, pensions and a range of insurance products. M&S's expansion of its home shopping interests is the latest in a flurry of announcements

which foreshadow the dramatic growth of catalogue shopping. Next's home shopping catalogue, Next Directory, has proved a phenomenal success. And last year the Burton group made its first moves into the sector with the acquisitions of Innovations and Racing Green.

The method of selling goods to customers direct is growing at the expense of the old-fashioned "Big Book" catalogues where agents sell goods on a company's behalf in return for a discount.

Institutions worry over BT merger

Chris Goddard
Business Correspondent

British Telecom is facing unexpectedly stiff concern from some of its largest institutional shareholders over key aspects of its proposed £130m merger with its US partner, the long-distance carrier MCI, with just two weeks left before investors vote on the deal at an extraordinary general meeting on 15 April.

Some big shareholders are understood to have requested further briefings with BT, or called for additional information to clarify the company's claim that by buying MCI it will generate higher growth for investors. The UK group has estimated the merger will bring cost savings and other benefits worth £1.5bn over five years and will bring accelerated dividend growth.

One big institution, which did not want to be named, said it remained to be convinced by the commercial justification for the merger. "This is a very big merger with very large sums of money involved and it radically alters the rating of BT shares. We want to be sure it is the right thing to be doing," said a spokesman.

The concerns have emerged as MCI shareholders in the US prepare to vote on the merger

at the group's annual general meeting today. The vote will be the first crucial test of BT's unprecedented campaign to "market" the deal to investors on either side of the Atlantic. Some US shareholders are worried that the link with BT will lessen MCI's famously aggressive corporate culture. British shareholders will vote on the merger at an extraordinary general meeting on 15 April.

A leading telecommunications analyst suggested that though large shareholders would almost certainly vote in favour of the merger, they were likely to give BT a "hard time" after the deal went through.

"BT can certainly deliver good growth numbers if it wants to, but it's the underlying quality of these earnings which is concerning shareholders," the analyst added.

BT shares dropped 17.5p yesterday to 428p. In late trading they failed to recover any ground lost as share prices generally started to rally following steep falls early in the day.

STOCK MARKETS									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1997 High	1997 Low	Vol (m)	FTSE 100	Dow Jones	Nikkei
FTSE 100	4243.10	-64.80	-1.5	4444.30	3832.30	3.80			
FTSE 250	4497.40	-78.80	-1.7	4729.40	4018.30	3.58			
FTSE 350	2093.20	-32.80	-1.5	2194.30	1816.50	3.75			
FTSE SmallCap	2280.31	-32.41	-1.4	2374.20	1994.00	3.04			
FTSE All-Share	2067.37	-32.33	-1.5	2163.94	1791.55	3.69			
New York	5595.30	+1.82	+0.1	7085.16	5039.94	1.89			
Hong Kong	17899.58	-340.83	-1.9	22866.80	17203.65	0.891			
Shanghai	12074.19	-493.13	-3.7	13868.24	10204.87	3.481			
Frankfurt	3295.93	-183.12	-5.3	3480.84	2283.38	1.501			

INTEREST RATES									
Short sterling*					UK medium gov†				
3m	5.00	5.00	7.75	8.18	7.75	8.28			
6m	5.00	5.00	6.89	6.38	7.09	6.69			
1y	5.00	5.00	6.26	1.76					
2y	5.00	5.00	6.44	6.78	7.24				
3y	5.00	5.00							
Money Market Rates					Bond Yields*				
3m	5.00	5.00	7.75	8.18	7.75	8.28			
6m	5.00	5.00	6.89	6.38	7.09	6.69			
1y	5.00	5.00	6.26	1.76					
2y	5.00	5.00	6.44	6.78	7.24				
3y	5.00	5.00							
MAIN PRICE CHANGES									
Shares	Price (p)	Change (p)	Shares	Price (p)	Change (p)	Shares	Price (p)	Change (p)	Shares
Premier Oil	37	1.5	4.2	Capita Group	647.5	57.5	8.2		
Admiral & Wilson	155.5	4.2	2.7	David Bull Sys	472.5	35	6.3		
End Group	1144	28	2.5	Sun Life & Prov	278.5	18.5	6.3		

CURRENCIES									
£/\$					£/DM				
Spot	1.6458	+0.0046	1.6255		Spot	0.6073	-0.02	0.6551	
1m	1.6458	+0.0046	1.6255		1m	0.6124	-0.05	0.6551	
3m	1.6458	+0.0046	1.6255		3m	0.6073	-0.02	0.6551	
6m	1.6458	+0.0046	1.6255		6m	0.6073	-0.02	0.6551	
1y	1.6458	+0.0046	1.6255		1y	0.6073	-0.02	0.6551	
OTHER INDICATORS									
Oil Brent	18.75	-0.69	19.41		RPI	155.0	2.7	148.0	16 Apr
Gold	350.65	+2.70	398.55		GDP	109.7	+2.2	107.8	28 Apr
Gold E	212.85	-0.51	259.28		Base Rates				



COMMENT

There's been no great world event or crisis to shake investors' faith in Wall Street's extraordinary ascent into the heavens, nor is there any obvious spoiler on the horizon, unless it be the nightly appearance of Hale-Bopp.

Wall St isn't crashing. It's just got the hiccups

Are equity markets at a turning point, or another of those irritating little hiccups in the ever-onwards and upwards march of US share prices? This column has been pretty much consistently bearish – and wrong – about Wall Street for more than a year, so it would be silly to change our stance now that shares have begun to falter. Even so, there's a good case for believing the hiccup theory, for notwithstanding last week's jitters about short-term interest rates in the US, little has changed fundamentally.

There's been no great world event or crisis to shake investors' faith in Wall Street's extraordinary ascent into the heavens, nor is there any obvious spoiler on the horizon, unless it be the nightly appearance of Hale-Bopp, an astrological event which once upon a time would have portended the death of princes. As for the change in the US interest rate cycle, that has been something so long in anticipation that it seems astonishing it had any effect at all.

Nonetheless, when markets become seriously out of kilter, as Wall Street is at the moment, it sometimes takes little more than the actuality of an anticipated event to shift them. To believe Wall Street is sustainable at these levels is to believe there has been a paradigm change in the global and US economies which in turn allows for a fundamental rethink of traditional asset valuations. It is to believe the business cycle in the US is dead, that America's undoubted world

lead in IT, its deregulated labour and capital markets, its low-interest and inflation-rate economy will persist for ever, allowing corporate US of A to cream off economic wealth in ever greater quantities. This is, of course, largely illusion – so much hogwash.

These conditions may have a bit further to run yet, but nothing is forever and to think the business cycle has been abolished for good is to abandon all reason. This in itself is cause enough to be cautious about Wall Street. The fundamentals may also be starting to work against it. Wall Street is being fed at present frothy heights by a continued high flow of funds into equities. If last week's rate increase is followed in short order by another, and another, then the delicate ecosystem which sustains the flow will be undermined. Another half-point rise in interest rates would almost certainly cut it off altogether, since rates available for cash on deposit and on bonds would begin to become attractive once more.

It can readily be seen that the Fed's next move becomes even more decisive than usual for Wall Street. There's no predicting what Alan Greenspan will do; there are few clues in what he says. Those who believe in the bull case for equities insist he won't have to do anything since the Fed has at long last succeeded in setting the US economy on a sustainable glide path of low inflation and reasonable growth, requiring only minor adjustments to the controls every now and again (more of the death of economics here).

Those who don't point to recent revised GDP figures showing growth of 3.8 per cent in the last quarter. That's too high for a developed economy of the US's size and undoubtedly inflationary. A full-blown crash continues to look highly unlikely but a period of adjustment to reality very credible.

Buying ban would not help takeover process

David Morris, former chairman of Northern Electric, raises a good talking point by suggesting the cards are unduly stacked against defending companies in the takeover code, even if there seems no immediate possibility of reform. By choosing the election campaign to launch the debate, he's also given it a political twist, for it is well known that Labour, even in its new form, abhors the culture of takeover that permeates British industry and commerce, blaming it largely on City money-making short-termism.

But Mr Morris is wrong on his specific grievance – the ability of bidding companies to buy shares in the target after the bid is launched. Mr Morris claims that without this concession, Cal Energy would not have won its bid for Northern Electric last year, and that the practice should be banned, as it is in the US. The trouble is that the situation is not made any better by its illegality in the US, where the fate of takeover bids is largely determined by arbitrators and

those with a vested interest in the outcome of the bid. Is this what Mr Morris wants?

Certainly the ability of advisers to buy shares in either party in an attempt to swing the result would also have to be banned if we went down this route. Indeed, in the Northern case it was rather a question of six of one, half a dozen of the other, for Northern's own advisers engaged in precisely this sort of market operation with disastrous regulatory consequences.

It seems quite wrong that the ability of investors to buy and sell shares should be curtailed so as to enhance the difficulties of a successful takeover. The logical conclusion to this line of thought would be to ban all dealings during the course of a bid: few people would support that. Labour will no doubt try to make takeovers more difficult one way or another – whether it be through regulatory means or competition policy. But this kind of meddling with the market doesn't seem the appropriate way.

Sugar has met his match in the City

It is not by chance that Amstrad's acronym Islands for Alan Michael Sugar Trading. Ever since he started business life flogging car aerials from the back of a van in his native Hackney, Mr Sugar has always prided himself on his ability to make a quick turn. From the outset, his ability has been that of

making a fast buck out of a gap in the market – whether it be no-frills hi-fi, cheap and cheerful word processors or aesthetically challenged satellite dishes.

The great wheeler-dealer once said: "We're interested in mass-marketing anything. If there was a market in mass-produced nuclear weapons, we'd market them too." Mr Sugar's track is to get out as soon as the big players in the consumer electronics world move in with their greater marketing clout and distribution power.

So the decision to sell loss-making Danell – the jewel in what's left of Amstrad's crown – comes as no surprise. Multiple phone handsets have become a commodity, selling for as little as £10. It is now a market for the big boys. That the Danell deal nets Amstrad's investors a sixfold return on a £16.3m investment over three-and-a-half years speaks volumes for Mr Sugar's trading instincts.

Mr Sugar has met his match in the City – the supposed citadel of short-termism. Five years ago institutional investors blocked his plans to take lowly-rated Amstrad private, describing Mr Sugar's bid as an attempt to buy the company on the cheap. And last year a merger with Pakt broke down over price. His latest move, coupled with talk of returning value to shareholders, looks like controlled liquidation of Amstrad. It is also a further indication that Mr Sugar, 50 last week, wants to spend more time with Tottenham Hotspur, the under-achieving Premier League club he controls.

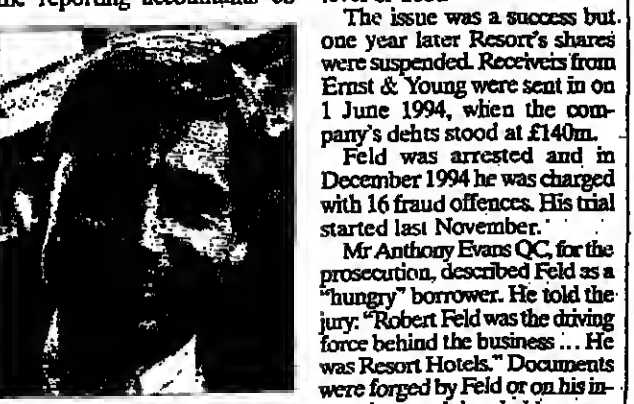
Resort Hotels chief jailed for eight years

John Willcock

Robert Feld, the former managing director of Brighton-based Resort Hotels, was jailed for eight years yesterday after being convicted of making false statements and using forged documents during a £20m rights issue five years ago.

The conviction is an important success for the Serious Fraud Office (SFO), which fought the case, coming after years of high-profile failures like the Maxwell case.

It is also likely to have repercussions for Coopers & Lybrand, the reporting accountants too.



Robert Feld: convicted of fraud in £20m rights issue

The case was investigated by the SFO with the assistance of a team from the Sussex Police Fraud Squad. The probe centred on the false picture that Feld presented of Resort's financial position in 1992 when he launched the £20m rights issue.

Feld had quickly built the hotel chain up to over 50 properties, largely through rights issues, which cumulatively attracted over £50m from shareholders. He used forged documents to mislead Coopers and Lybrand, the reporting accountants, and to mislead the courts.

Feld's story started in Brighton, where his parents were hoteliers. He started working for them in 1972 after dropping out of university, and became a partner in the family business four years later.

In 1983 he formed Norfolk Resort Hotel, and bought the family partnership and Preston Continental Hotel (Brighton), a company formed by Feld and his sister in 1980. He raised money from the Business Expansion Scheme (BES).

Feld gained greater access to finance by gaining admission to the Unlisted Securities Market, the precursor to AIM, in 1988, and a full listing later in the 1990s. By that time Feld had changed the company's name to Resort Hotels, and was concentrating on 3-star hotels and the business and conference trade.



Over the moon: Wetherspoon's expansion plans will create 10,000 full- and part-time jobs in the next few years

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

Pubs group JD Wetherspoon announced an accelerated pub opening programme yesterday to a move that industry watchers said was a first defence against a rumoured bid from brewing giant Scottish & Newcastle.

The company said the announcement that it planned to open 350 outlets by 2001, creating 10,000 full- and part-time jobs over the next five years, had nothing to do with a weekend press article suggesting S&N had run its slide rule over the fast-growing pub retailer.

Wetherspoon has been the subject of bid speculation for some time after swoops by the brewing leaders on other fast-growing concept pub and restaurant groups. Over the past year Whitbread has acquired Pelican, Greene King has bought the Magic Pub Company and Rank has snapped up Tom Cobligh.

In each case the large integrated groups were attempting to buy a ready-made launchpad into the eating-out market, which analysts believe is the fastest-growing part of the leisure market. Britain lags far behind the US in terms of spend per head on eating and drinking outside the home but it is catching up fast.

Wetherspoon, which has 170 pubs around the country employing 5,500 people, is looking to build its chain at around 60 pubs a year. "Our jobs programme is one of the highest in the pub industry and will be a major boost for many regions," said Tim Martin, the group chairman.

The group, which last month reported a 46 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £8.1m for the six months to January, said capital expenditure in the year to July was likely to be in the region of £52m. It opened 18 pubs in the first half and expects to open another 30 in the second half as the roll-out rate builds to 60 openings a year.

Wetherspoon has been one of the most successful of recent flotations, its shares having risen almost tenfold since it floated at the end of 1992. Yesterday they closed 2.5p lower at 1.185p.

Labour backs Taskforce 2000

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Labour would continue to fund Taskforce 2000, the Government-sponsored body created to publicise the millennium computer timebomb, if the party won power in the election, a spokesman confirmed.

The news comes as the Department of Trade and Industry, which set up Taskforce 2000, is believed to have offered short-term funds to help the body over its cash crisis. Public cash has gone on the Taskforce's publicity campaigns.

Geoffrey Hoon, Labour's telecommunications and science spokesman, said the party had agreed to continue funding the taskforce. He said the commitment involved a "tiny" sum of money and did not raise public spending issues.

The taskforce has five staff, including two secretarial workers on a free loan from a private donor. The other two are consultants – one on secondment from the DTI and another from the computing group EDS.

Only Mr Ouen's salary is paid from the mixture of public and private grants.

Labour's decision is likely to be greeted with huge relief by the computer world. Experts have predicted chaos across industry and commerce at the millennium because most computers cannot cope with the date change. Almost all computer programmes can only recognise two digits of the year and may cease to function when the date changes to 2000.

IN BRIEF

Vodafone subscriber growth slows

Vodafone Group, Britain's largest mobile phone network, has released disappointing subscriber growth numbers for the first three months of the year. Its net subscriber base grew by 67,000, down from 146,000 in the last quarter of 1996. Analysts blamed large numbers of customers leaving after heavily discounted incentive packages, sold over Christmas 1995, had expired. Orange is likely to release better figures this morning, showing net growth of some 90,000 subscribers between January and March and confirming it as the fastest growing of the four mobile operators.

Think-tank backs minimum wage

A minimum wage is needed to lift low-paid families out of the poverty trap, according to a report published today by the Employment Policy Institute. Author Holly Sutherland said that currently nearly all of any increase in earnings is taken away in higher tax and reduced benefits. Means-tested benefits help to keep some people in poverty. A minimum wage would either remove or reduce the poverty trap, especially if combined with lower tax rates.

Racal looking for Network partner

Racal Electronics, the defence to electronics group, has confirmed it was considering taking on an equity partner in its Network Services business. It said it was too early to give a potential value of any external investment and was seeking to expand the business ahead of deregulation of the European Union's telecom services in 1998. Racal Network Services is the second largest UK provider of managed data network services, and seventh largest in the world.

Japanese banks to restructure

Three of Japan's biggest banks are to restructure ahead of deregulation aimed at exposing Japanese financial institutions to greater international competition. Hokkaido Tokai-Mitsubishi Bank is to merge with rival Hokkaido bank, and Nippon Credit Bank is to close three on-bank affiliates and shed a fifth of its workforce. All three banks will withdraw from overseas business. Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto announced a so-called Big Bang programme in November to lift restrictions on financial products and pricing. The Finance Ministry estimates Japanese banks owe ¥34,000bn (£149bn) in bad loans, mostly linked to property deals in the early 1990s. Private economists put the figure two to three times higher.

GKN teams up with European firms

GKN Defence, part of the UK engineering group GKN, plans to tender for German and French defence orders jointly with France's Giat Industries and the German consortium Arge/GTK. They plan to tender for an initial 200 vehicles each with common specifications and have signed a letter of intent to co-operate on the development of an armoured personnel carrier. They said they would determine the maximum amount of common components and propose a common organisation to limit development and production costs.

Rolls wins \$240m order from airline

Rolls-Royce has clinched a deal potentially worth \$240m (£140m) with Continental Airlines. The airline has ordered RB211-535 engines for up to 16 additional Boeing 737s. The deal also involves Rolls-Royce Canada in an eight-year repair and overhaul package. Rolls-Royce Capital and Rolls-Royce Commercial Aero Engines are to supply spare engines worth over \$45m.

Triplex buys German engineer

Triplex Lloyd, the UK engineering group, has acquired TFB Feinwerktechnik Bochum, the German company which casts blades and vanes for turbine engines, from Thyssen Guss AG, a member of the Thyssen AG group. Thyssen-Hütte metals group, Triplex is to pay DM17m (£6m), followed by DM11m if turnover targets are met in the next five years.

Salehurst plans £2m placing

Salehurst, the supplier of paper to magazine publishers, announced plans for a full listing on the London Stock Exchange through a placing which values it at £15m to £18m. It hopes to raise around £2m to exploit growth opportunities and reduce gearing.

Investors sue over mining group's Borneo gold claims

David Usborne
New York

As trading in its shares was resumed yesterday in Toronto, Bre-X, the beleaguered Canadian exploration company, faced two class-action lawsuits from stockholders who are accusing it of overstating the extent of gold deposits at its much-trumpeted Bussang find in the jungles of Borneo.

The value of Bre-X plunged 80 per cent in a matter of minutes last Thursday after markets got wind of reports that the Bussang find may produce only a fraction of the gold initially promised by the company. On Thursday, Bre-X shares fell to \$1.97 from \$9.41.

Two groups of Bre-X stock-

Buch investment in fabric maker sends shares soaring

Patrick Toohy

Shares in Somic, the tiny maker of yarns and woven fabrics, soared 72p to 158.5p yesterday after Neville Buch, the former chairman of exhibitions group Blenheim, emerged as a major investor.

It is the second time the flamboyant Mr Buch has become involved in a quoted company since he walked away with £25m after selling Blenheim to Lord Hoffick's United News & Media for almost £500m last year.

He recently took a 29.9 per cent stake in BBB, a small design and marketing company which he now chairs.

Shares in BBB Design have risen sharply since Mr Buch's arrival, rising from a low of 16p to over 80p before settling back at last night's close of 65p.

Mr Buch seems to have worked a similar trick at Somic where his investment is already showing a paper profit of £330,000.

In a statement Somic said Mr Buch, together with a family trust and a company associated with him, had bought 464,000 shares in Somic, representing 21.9 per cent of the company.

Somic added that it had appointed Mr Buch and three other directors as non-executives of the company.

Together the four new directors hold 34.4 per cent of Somic. All these share deals were made on 27 March.

Richard Blackburn, who will continue as executive chair-

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business

Hammerson merger makes sense

The leaked merger talks between Hammerson and MEPC were a surprise, but they make sense for a number of reasons. An enlarged group would jump into the FISE index, attracting tracker funds, provide some geographical diversity and give Hammerson the cash flow to fund its ambitious development programme. A bid would be a well-timed opportunistic attempt to take advantage of MEPC's perceived current difficulties.

MEPC's shares rose 7.5p to 485p yesterday as the market treated with a pinch of salt the official statement that discussions were over and focused on Hammerson's refusal to rule out a hostile bid for its larger rival.

Attempts can be expected from both sides to highlight differences over the next few weeks, but really there are remarkable similarities between the companies. Both expanded overseas in the hope of ironing out the property cycle at home. Both failed to do so and suffered in the industry slump that followed the late 1980s boom. Both have had a degree of success in digging themselves out of that self-inflicted hole.

The two companies are perceived in contrasting lights in the City, however, thanks to one fundamental difference. At MEPC, James Tuckey, who was instrumental in disastrous developments such as London's Alban Gate, is still in place. Hammerson has benefited from the appointment of former Greycoat man Ron Spinnery.

Hammerson is the sector's delinquent son who has seen the light and mended his ways. Its decision to rein in its sprawling world-wide portfolio, while retaining some exposure to the troubled (but hopefully recovering) European markets, has been praised. It has also taken the current sector bull run by the horns and rolled out an ambitious expansion programme.

MEPC, by contrast, has proceeded with the caution of a company that burnt its shareholders' fingers so badly last time round that this time it is taking no chances. It has sold out of Europe, arguably at the wrong end of the cycle, and focused on the US retail market, where competition is stiff.

Selling smaller high-yielding holdings in favour of lower-yielding, but higher-growth, large properties is the right thing to do but it will hit income in the short term, leaving little scope to raise the dividend which has been pegged at 20p throughout the 1990s.

As this column pointed out after Hammerson's figures, the company is as well placed as any to benefit from the improvement in the property market, but its shares, at 431.5p, already factor in much of the good news.

MEPC, with its shares trading at

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

about forecast net asset value for this September's year end, also looks fully valued with only fairly weak support from a gross yield of 5.1 per cent. While a bid remains a possibility, however, the shares are worth holding.

Liberty gets rid of another distraction

Liberty's decision to sell its half stake in the "no-brand" Muji stores to its Japanese joint-venture partner, Ryohin Keikaku, is hardly a surprise.

The new Liberty management team led by chairman Denis Cassidy and chief executive Ian Thomson has a stated strategy to concentrate on the group's flagship store in London's Regent Street as well as its airport shops business.

The regional branches were closed last year while the board is dreaming up ways of expanding the Regent Street store by freeing up space currently occupied by wood-paneled corridors and dark, dusty rooms lined with Liberty family portraits.

Mr Thomson believes that there is an estimated 45,000 to 50,000 square feet of additional retail space that can be freed up.

There will be a little more as a result of the Muji deal because Liberty is reclaiming the main outlet in Great Marlborough Street, creating an additional 3,000 square feet for the Regent Street store.

The £1.25m price tag may not look much but it was probably the right time to sell.

Since it first started trading five or six years ago, Muji has only just started making profits, with a pre-exceptional figure of £110,000 on sales of £4m last year.

Last year's figure was turned into a £116,000 loss after exceptional items such as the closure of the Glasgow branch.

Liberty shares have come off quite a bit since their 440p level at the beginning of the year and fell a further 2.5p to 367.5p yesterday.

With full-year results due later this month there are no forecasts available for what is a small company with a dominant 44 per cent stake held by the Stewart-Liberty company.

This may seem a deterrent, as

might the company's exorbitant rating based on recovery prospects.

But the new management has delivered on its promises so far and Bryan Myerson, the South African rebel shareholder of UK Active Value funds, holds a 17 per cent stake and would like to buy the family out. Mr Myerson is supportive of the new management's strategy. Shareholders should do the same and hold on.

Capita tripped up by profit-takers

Capita, the management services group that has grown by snapping up outsourced contracts to administer pension funds or collect debts, and also operates the nursery vouchers scheme, had the dubious distinction of falling further in percentage terms than any other of the top 250 companies yesterday morning. By midday it had fallen 75p to 630p, and that on top of a 17.5p fall last Thursday.

It is tempting to see the slump as political, a response to the continuing failure of the Government to make any real progress in reducing the Labour party's mountainous lead in the opinion polls. But whatever backwoods investors might think, the City has long since convinced itself that a New Labour government will of necessity be as keen on cost saving as the Conservatives.

And as managing director Paul Pinder says, 38 per cent of the group's business is with local authorities, the vast majority of which are already Labour or Lib Dem controlled.

In any market shake-out, shares which have risen most become vulnerable to profit-taking. Capita shares had doubled between last October and the recent peak of 825p and were inevitably at risk when investors were looking to lock in profits in case of a substantial market correction.

In fact the steep fall in the shares during the morning was driven by a very low volume. The largest single transaction was 7,000 shares, which suggests that there was no institutional selling at all. The shares yield just 1 per cent, but the group is cash-rich and analysts are not changing their forecasts for the current year. If the UK follows the US, where 2.5 per cent of the labour force now works in call centres responding to customer enquiries, outsourcing has a long way to go.

That is the good news. The bad is that, down 58p on the day at 647p, the shares now trade on almost 40 times forecast earnings, which leaves little room for error.

Time for Tesco to be on the receiving end

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



Accomplished: Derek Sach's policies were successful

A large number of leading receivers are breathing a collective sigh of relief now Derek Sach has been named head of Royal Bank of Scotland's joint venture with Tesco, Tesco Personal Finance.

It was Mr Sach who introduced a draconian system to RBS in 1992 when he set up specialised lending services as a stand-alone department to help troubled companies. Mr Sach, a former 31 man, attacked two of the receivers' most sacred cows.

First, he made them tender for receiverships, in contrast to the other high street banks, which handed out receivership appointments to selected firms. Critics within the insolvency profession claimed this led to "low-balling", where firms which were keenest for the work would quote ruinously low fees.

Second, Mr Sach abolished the practice of allowing insolvency specialists who had been nursing sick companies to be appointed as receivers once the companies had gone bust. This annoyed the rest of the profession, who maintain that the incumbent specialist is best placed to handle a receivership.

None of which bothers Mr Sach. His policies were a roaring success both for RBS and its shareholders. As a spokesman pointed out yesterday, "The success of his innovative company rescue philosophy can be measured by the fact that RBS appointed 418 receivers in 1992 and only 57 in 1995."

Or as one receiver said yesterday through gritted teeth: "He's an extremely accomplished banker who has done an extremely good job for the image of his bank."

Greig Middleton healthcare sector analyst wins Duxor limerick competition. I reported recently that London International Group (LIG), maker of Duxor condoms among other brands, was holding a limerick competition to launch its corporate web site. Competitors had to mention at least two LIG

products. I can exclusively reveal the winner is Julia Dickson of Greig. Her winning rhyme goes like this: "There was a young dentist called Lee Who had run out of Biogel D He wore ten Avants He'd pinched from his auntie's. At least they were still latex-free!"

I should explain that Biogel D is a type of surgical glove, while Avants are condoms made from a "technologically advanced polyurethane material that is thinner and more sensitive than latex".

Company announcements have changed irrevocably now that so many football clubs have floated. This week Charlton Athletic felt it had to proclaim to the market that it has "secured on a long-term contract the club's exciting England under-18 striker, Kevin Lisbie". Would this exciting news ignite the share price? After all, it has lagged a bit since Charlton floated last month at 80p, only to fall to the mid-50s.

Nick Batram, soccer share analyst at Greig Middleton, says: "I'm a football fan and I've never heard of Kevin Lisbie. On the other hand, if he develops into the next Alan Shearer, that would be a good thing."

Mr Batram claims he can provide unbiased advice: "I'm

an Oxford United fan. Most other analysts support Arsenal or Manchester United."

Despite being a born and bred "Ox" fan, Mr Batram concedes it is highly unlikely Oxford will trouble the stock market in the foreseeable future. Charlton's share price fell 2p to 62.5p yesterday. Keep practising, Kevin.

Employees at ING Barings in London are holding their breath pending an announcement on Thursday over a radical corporate shake-up.

Yesterday a bank spokesman confirmed the Dutch bank's international arm was to be merged with Barings, the merchant bank bought for a pound two years ago following the Leeson debacle.

Barings survivors are keeping their fingers crossed that the newly merged global unit will be called ING Barings. The bank has titled the revamp "Blueprint" and set up a steering committee, whose lucky members will be named on Thursday.

There had been fears that the 400-year-old Barings name might sink beneath the waves in this latest reshuffle, but a spokesman yesterday said ING Barings would be "a logical name".

John Willcock

MEPC: at a glance

Market value: £2.03bn, share price 485p

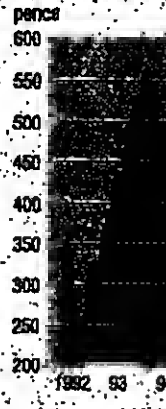
Five year record

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Revenue (£m)	18.9	15.5	20.1	21.0	22.9
Earnings per share (pence)	18.9	15.5	20.1	21.0	22.9
Dividends per share (pence)	18.9	15.5	20.1	21.0	22.9
NAV (pence)	453	417	473	457	449

Dividend Cover



Share price



INDEPENDENT FANTASY FOOTBALL

LATEST RESULTS AND TOP 50 TEAMS

Top Fifty LEAGUE TABLE

CALCULATED ON MATCHES PLAYED FROM 17 AUGUST - 23 MARCH

POS	NAME	TEAM	POINTS
1	MR PETER FRANKENTAL	JOSE MARTI	864
2	MR ASHLEY BRETTLE	RELEGATION 12	844
3	MR PAUL MATTHEW	THE DOOR MAT	843
4	MR SEAN BROSNAN	OASIS	842
5	MR SIMON LIU	DEFENCE ROVERS	829
6	MR IAN CROUT	SILK CITY	824
7	MR ALEXANDRA FEAST	THE ZOROSTRIAN ZENITH ZYGRIE	823
8	MR JOHN COX	SOUTHRILL FC	820
9	MR WILLIAM BARR	KRUEGER FC	820
10	MR KEITH HOKNEY	ORGANIC MANURE FC	819
11	MR RICK YAP	OUT OF MIND	819
12	MR BEN KENDALL	TURKEY'S TRIGGERS	819
13	MR PETER FRANKENTAL	ARLENSU	816
14	MR ADAM HOGG	BLAGGOT HOGG	815
15	MR G WHITE	WHITE CITY	815
16	MR SCOTT MCINERNEY		814
17	MR PETER FRANKENTAL	SANDINO	814
18	MR GARFIELD JAMES MACALEN	GARFIELD BOYS 2ND	813
19	MR GRAHAM LONGSDANE	SANDLING'S STROLLERS	813
20	MR JONATHAN MCCROSSIN	WASH TOP ARMY	812
21	MR ROBERT GREENFIELD	THE GULLS	809
22	MR SIMON DRAPER	PLATE FC	808
23	MR GARY HAYLES	101 ALLSTARS	808
24	MR JOE GOODING	TEAM SQUIDLIPS	808
25	MR J GODWIN	NORWOOD	807
26	MR S J PERRY	THE GREAT ESCAPERS	805
27	MR D R MILLS	THE MUSHROOM LAYERS	805
28	MR TONY AGNDALE	OLLIE VILLA	804
29	MR JOHN WANGING	4000 HOLES	804
30	MR IVAN HOOD	EAST GATE ROVERS	804
31	MR P CURRAN		803
32	MR TIM PAUL GERMAN	ATHLETICO AESTICO I	802
33	MR ANDY LANE	IF ANYONE CAN TOUCH	802
34	MR DARRIN NICHOLAS	EDNA	801
35	MR JOHN BRITTE	FAKE MADRID	801
36	MR K B MALCOLM	INTER MALCOLM	801
37	MR PAUL FULLWOOD	KING OF HOBBIES FC	801
38	MR A SWANNY	DOG'S BRICK	800
39	MR STEVE PAYNE	NO FUTURE IN FUGRAY	800
40	MR A MORGAN	KICK START	800
41	MR SIMON HERMANSEN	SIMON'S SUPER TEAM	800
42	MR R PRINGLE	DEPOALE VILLA 7	799
43	MR MARTIN RENNICK	WILD ROVERS	799
44	MR MARK HAYDEN	TROWBRIDGE WANDERERS	799
45	MR STEVE BAZZANO	BAZZY'S DEFENCE	799
46	MR PETER SHERLOCK	LINCOLN ST GILES	798
47	MR BEN ANDREWS	BOOZER'S BATTALERS	798
48	MR ANDREW BOLTON	ANDREW'S B TEAM	798
49	MR BILL COOPER	YEP HOP 2000	797
50	MR TERRY JONES	ANDROGEN UNITED	795
51	MR RAYMOND CHADEN	ALLEKYE MEN FROM UNGLE 2	795
52	MR ALEX FITZGERALD	ALF CHANTON'S ELECT	795
53	MR G TURNER	DAWN'S HEROES	795

THE INDEPENDENT INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY



Today we publish the latest results in our Independent Fantasy Football game, supported by Philips Energy Saver Light Bulbs.

The Team Market and Scores table published below, shows four scores. Due to the lack of Premiership matches played between Monday 24 March - Sunday 30 March, column Wk33 shows no scores. Column B lists all points scored before the transfer period. Column A lists all points scored after the transfer period. The Overall (Ov) column lists the total amount of points scored in all matches played from Saturday 17 August - Sunday 30 March.

Also published today is the Top 50 League table (see left). It lists the overall top scoring Independent Fan-

tasy Football managers and their teams for matches played between Saturday 17 August - Sunday 23 March. Results will be published every Wednesday in The Independent for all games played from the previous Monday to Sunday inclusive. They will also appear the following Sunday, in the Independent on Sunday. The overall Top 50 League table will be printed every Wednesday and again on Sunday.

Terms and conditions as previously published

PRIZES

The overall winner at the end of the season will be the entrant who has accrued more points than any other Independent Fantasy Football team in that time. Win the ultimate prize - a trip to the 1998

World Cup in France. The winner, plus companion, will see all the action of a quarter-final and a semi-final of their choice, plus the final. In addition, the highest scoring team each month will win a pair of tickets to one of England's World Cup qualifying games at Wembley.

SCORING SYSTEM

4 points for a goal ■ 4 points for a goalkeeper/defender clean sheet ■ 3 points for a successful assist ■ 1 point when a player is selected and plays ■ 1 point for a winning goal ■ 3 points for a manager win, 1 point for a draw ■ Lose 1 point for a yellow card ■ Lose 3 points for a red card

TEAM MARKET AND SCORES

OVERALL SCORE CALCULATED ON MATCHES PLAYED FROM 17 AUGUST - 30 MARCH; WEEK 33 SCORE CALCULATED ON MATCHES PLAYED FROM 17 MARCH - 30 MARCH																																				
CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	POINTS	VALUE	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	POINTS	VALUE	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	POINTS	VALUE	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	POINTS	VALUE																	
			Wk33	B	A	Ov	(£m)				Wk33	B	A	Ov				Wk33	B	A	Ov	(£m)														
GOALKEEPERS																																				
300	Saunders	ARS	0	0	0	0	42	47	5.9	477	Raddick	LIV	0	31	3.3	649	Slattery	OER	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	836	Hughes	CHE	0	0	19	47	66	5		
301	Bonachi	AV	0	0	0	0	5	42	47	4.0	478	Scales	TOT	0	6	1.5	650	Anscombe	OER	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	837	Speor	COV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54
302	Flowers	BHA	0	0	0	0	19	40	39	3.2	479	Harbison	LIV	0	1	0.1	651	Edwards	ARS	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	838	Whelan	COV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54
303	Shaw	CHE	0	0	0	0	2	21	3.7	480	Neville (P)	MU	0	22	30.7	652	Van Der Laan	ARS	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	839	Nelson	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
304	Hutchinson	CHE	0	0	0	0	1	15	1.5	481	Irwin	MU	0	36	43	653	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	840	Nelson	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
305	Opryzovic	CHE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	482	Palmer	MU	0	32	39.1	654	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	841	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
306	Presnam	SW	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	483	Smart	MU	0	32	39.1	655	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	842	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
307	Southall	EVE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	484	May	MU	0	31	40	656	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	843	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
308	Wargus	SW	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	485	Falkers	MID	0	18	15	657	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	844	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
309	Poole	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	486	Wright	MID	0	14	12	658	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	845	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
310	Healy	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	487	Peckham	MID	0	15	12	659	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	846	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
311	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	488	Wright	MID	0	14	12	660	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	847	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
312	Roberts	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	489	Wright	MID	0	14	12	661	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	848	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
313	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	490	Wright	MID	0	14	12	662	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	849	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
314	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	491	Wright	MID	0	14	12	663	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	850	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
315	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	492	Wright	MID	0	14	12	664	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	851	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
316	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	493	Wright	MID	0	14	12	665	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	852	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
317	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	494	Wright	MID	0	14	12	666	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	853	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
318	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	495	Wright	MID	0	14	12	667	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	854	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
319	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	496	Wright	MID	0	14	12	668	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	855	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
320	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	497	Wright	MID	0	14	12	669	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	856	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
321	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	498	Wright	MID	0	14	12	670	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	857	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
322	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	499	Wright	MID	0	14	12	671	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	858	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
323	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	500	Wright	MID	0	14	12	672	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	859	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
324	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	501	Wright	MID	0	14	12	673	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	860	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
325	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	502	Wright	MID	0	14	12	674	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	861	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
326	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	503	Wright	MID	0	14	12	675	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	862	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
327	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	504	Wright	MID	0	14	12	676	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	863	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
328	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	505	Wright	MID	0	14	12	677	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	864	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
329	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	506	Wright	MID	0	14	12	678	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	865	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
330	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	507	Wright	MID	0	14	12	679	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	866	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
331	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	508	Wright	MID	0	14	12	680	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	867	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
332	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	509	Wright	MID	0	14	12	681	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	868	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
333	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	510	Wright	MID	0	14	12	682	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	869	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
334	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	511	Wright	MID	0	14	12	683	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	870	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
335	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	512	Wright	MID	0	14	12	684	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	871	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
336	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	513	Wright	MID	0	14	12	685	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	872	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
337	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	514	Wright	MID	0	14	12	686	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	873	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
338	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	515	Wright	MID	0	14	12	687	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	874	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
339	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	516	Wright	MID	0	14	12	688	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	875	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
340	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	517	Wright	MID	0	14	12	689	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	876	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
341	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	518	Wright	MID	0	14	12	690	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	877	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
342	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	519	Wright	MID	0	14	12	691	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	878	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
343	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	520	Wright	MID	0	14	12	692	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	879	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
344	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	521	Wright	MID	0	14	12	693	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	880	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
345	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	522	Wright	MID	0	14	12	694	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	881	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
346	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	523	Wright	MID	0	14	12	695	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	882	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
347	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	524	Wright	MID	0	14	12	696	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	883	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
348	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	525	Wright	MID	0	14	12	697	Edwards	EVE	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	884	Quinlan	AV	0	0	14	38	4	58	54	
349	McGee	LEI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	526	Wright	M																								

Foreign Exchange Rates									
STERLING					DOLLAR				
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	6 months	Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	6 months
US	1.6455	1.6455	1.6455	1.6455	US	0.6030	0.6030	0.6030	0.6030
Canada	0.7000	0.7000	0.7000	0.7000	Canada	0.7000	0.7000	0.7000	0.7000
Germany	0.5000	0.5000	0.5000	0.5000	Germany	0.5000	0.5000	0.5000	0.5000
France	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	France	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000
Italy	0.8000	0.8000	0.8000	0.8000	Italy	0.8000	0.8000	0.8000	0.8000
Spain	1.6000	1.6000	1.6000	1.6000	Spain	1.6000	1.6000	1.6000	1.6000
Japan	160.00	160.00	160.00	160.00	Japan	160.00	160.00	160.00	160.00
Switzerland	0.7000	0.7000	0.7000	0.7000	Switzerland	0.7000	0.7000	0.7000	0.7000
Netherlands	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	Netherlands	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000
Belgium	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	Belgium	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000
Australia	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	Australia	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000
New Zealand	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	New Zealand	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000
South Africa	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	South Africa	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000
India	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	India	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000
Singapore	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	Singapore	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000	0.6000
OTHER SPOT RATES									
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	6 months	Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	6 months
Argentina	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Argentina	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Brazil	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Brazil	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Chile	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Chile	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Colombia	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Colombia	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Costa Rica	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Costa Rica	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Cuba	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Cuba	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Ecuador	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Ecuador	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
El Salvador	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	El Salvador	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Guatemala	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Guatemala	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Honduras	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Honduras	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Kenya	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Kenya	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Malaysia	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Malaysia	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Maldives	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Maldives	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Mexico	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Mexico	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nicaragua	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Nicaragua	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Pakistan	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Pakistan	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Peru	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Peru	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Philippines	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Philippines	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Poland	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	Poland	0.0000	0.0000		



ex dividend
exit charge applies
when units are sold
formerly 'offer'
formerly 'bid'
Non SIB recognised funds

[illegible]

GRAND NATIONAL: Mudahim's victory in Ireland reinforces the claims of Lord Gyllene Brookshaw resumes a pilgrimage

To the racing public at large, Steve Brookshaw has become notable only this season as the trainer of Saturday's Grand National favourite, Lord Gyllene. But to the people of Fazeley and Kirby, on the outskirts of Aintree, he is already an awe-inspiring figure.

The fair citizens of those Liverpool districts still talk of the April day in 1995 when they watched the course's Foxhunters' Chase on television. One contestant was going so wildly west they all rushed out of the room to push the tailgate up against the front door. So almost blipped their way on to the radar at Manchester's Ringway airport that day but eventually charted a path that allowed them to complete the course. "I went wide because he was hanging so badly," Brookshaw recalls. "He almost took me into the Canal [the jockey failed to stipulate whether this was Suez or Panama]."

Aintree has in fact been a dramatic stage for *la famille Brookshaw*. In 1950, in the days when the jockeys kissed their loved ones farewell on the way out to the moorland fences, Steve's father Peter won the Foxhunters on Hilmer. Thirteen years later, his uncle Tim, who had been the champion jockey, suffered a paralyzing injury there which was to remove him from the sport.

Steve Brookshaw himself was riding in point-to-points from the time young boys attempt shaving even though there is no hair on their face. "When you were allowed to ride at 14 I did

Richard Edmondson talks to a trainer with a record of Aintree family success

it, and by the time they put it up to 16 I was that age anyway, so I didn't miss any riding," he said yesterday. "And I haven't retired yet. Before I go I would like to ride against my daughter Heidi one day." Eighteen-year-old Heidi will get a 28-year start.

Much of Brookshaw's success between the flags was for a man who has been supporting his family for 35 years. Stan Clarke first bought a horse when an offer of 75 guineas was enough to prise La Grandesse away from the Newmarket Sales. When the mare eventually won a race it was in the hands of Tim Brookshaw.

Clarke was interested in horses because his father had been a cavalry man. While many of those that did return from the First World War reported on the living hell of the Belgian killing grounds, Clarke was able to recount rather more pleasant times in Egypt and India.

Clarke Jr formerly trained himself at a location which sounds like the venue for Pooch and Piglet's holiday, Barton-under-Needwood in Staffordshire, but then retired to concentrate on business. The aftermath suggests Britain's trainers should be thankful for his exodus.

It may be safe to assume you will never see Stan Clarke wearing woollen gloves without fingertips in a soup kitchen. He is the chairman of the Birm-

ingham-based property and investment company St Modwen Properties, which recently announced pre-tax profits of £11.7m for 1996. To make sure he does not get bored in his 64th year Stan is also the chairman of Uttoxeter and Newcastle racecourses.

Clarke does depart from the traditional perception of the high-flying businessman in some areas. His voice does not possess the fluency of the English public school system but sounds rather as though it should be emanating from under a tin hat on some scaffolding. In addition he has a near Howard Hughes-level of interest in hygiene, and is well known for having all the lavatories checked at his racecourses before the gates are opened. "I hope the toilets at Uttoxeter are not only the cleanest in racing but the cleanest anywhere," he said yesterday. "They're modern and tiled, and they are beautiful."

"I don't inspect all the toilets these days, but I have people who check them for me and there is a sign in every one saying that if anyone is dissatisfied with the surroundings they should write to me. I'm very particular about that and I'm in full agreement with the headmaster who said you should judge a school by its toilets."

When Clarke regained his interest in racing, and specifically points and hunter-chasers, it was Brookshaw who was doing



Steve Brookshaw Photograph: Robert Hallam

Broderick in intensive care BBC to show World Cup live

Shane Broderick was in intensive care in a Dublin hospital yesterday following a bad fall at Fairyhouse. The Irish jockey suffered severe neck injuries and bruising to the spinal cord when falling from Another Deady in the Nuzum Handicap Chase on Monday.

A medical spokesman said: "Shane is seriously ill but there will be no long-term prognosis until the bruising goes down." Broderick was initially taken to the Blanchardstown Hospital before being transferred to the Mater Hospital in Dublin.

The jockey was visited in hospital yesterday by Tom Doran and Michael Hourigan, the owner and the trainer respectively of the top chaser Dorans Pride, a regular mount of Broderick's. Dorans Pride won the Power Gold Cup at Fairyhouse yesterday ridden by the substitute Richard Dunwoody.

"Shane managed a smile but there were tears in his eyes," Doran said. Dunwoody said: "We're all thinking of Shane, who is one of the most popular lads in the jockeys' room. I hope this will be a turning point."

Willie Carson arrived in Dubai yesterday for his first major assignment in his new role as TV pundit. The BBC won the race to show live the rearranged running of the Dubai World Cup, and will do so tomorrow afternoon as part of their Aintree coverage, with the former jockey as their man in the paddock. Reports from Montgomery from Dubai.

The timing of the 4m race, abandoned last Saturday because of heavy rain, has been brought forward to 4.30pm British time to fit in a 15-minute slot after the Glenlivet Anniversary 4-y-o Hurdle.

The track at Nad Al Sheba was re-opened yesterday morning, just three days after it was all but washed away by the mother of all thunderstorms. The sun here has shown unbendingly since Saturday, to the delight of the trainers of the 12 horses who have stayed on to run for the sport's richest purse. Richard Mandella, in charge of American challengers Siphon and Sandipit, said: "I would almost say the rain did it good. It looks better than before the storm. Now all we want to do is get the game under way."

Most of the candidates for tomorrow's big race tested the surface out yesterday.

Sheikh Mohammed's Smegnel, who breezed half a mile at his owner's private Al Quoz training track yesterday, is now the leading European in Ladbrokes' reformed market. The firm bets: 11-4 Siphon, 7-2 Sandipit, 4-1 Fominal Gold, 3-1 Kamatarra, Flemensfirth, 14-1 Key Of Luck, 20-1 Hokuto Vega, 35-1 Bijou d'Inde, Luso, Even Top, 40-1 Juggler.

EXETER

2.20 Give And Take 2.50 Lovelock 3.20 First Class (nb) 3.50 Super Tactics 4.20 Polden Pride 5.00 Country Lover

GOING: Firm. NB Right-hand, undulating course. Stiff test of stamina. Run-in of 260 yards.

WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: Mr Seagull (3.50) won at Towerton on Saturday.

LONG-DISTANCE BURNERS: Real Glee (4.50) has been sent 311 miles by J J Quinn from Stratford, North Yorkshire; Polden Pride (4.50) sent 144 miles by J J Quinn from Temple Gyle, Gloucestershire; Lovelock (2.50) sent 141 miles by R Lee from Blyth, Northumberland; Salween (2.50) sent 137 miles by N A Twicken from Northampton, Gloucestershire; "Theodore" (2.50) sent 131 miles by P Jevon from Ribblesdale, Lancashire; and Waverley (2.50) sent 135 miles by D Gundolf from Wantage, Oxfordshire.

2.20 ALL WOOL AXMINSTER 100 JUVENILE NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) £2,925 added 2m 2f

1. 321 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 322 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 323 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

2.50 MOORLAND AXMINSTER 100 MARES' ONLY SELLING HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS A) £2,925 added 2m 2f

1. 324 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 325 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 326 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

3.20 ROYAL SEASON AXMINSTER 100 NOVICE CHASE (CLASS D) £5,000 added 2m 3f

1. 327 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 328 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 329 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

3.50 TORBAY AXMINSTER 100 HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS D) £4,000 added 2m 3f

1. 330 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 331 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 332 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

4.20 ROYAL DARTMOUTH AXMINSTER 100 HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS D) £5,000 added 2m 2f

1. 333 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 334 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 335 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

4.50 TAMAR AXMINSTER 100 AMATEUR RIDERS' NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) £2,925 added 2m 3f 110yds

1. 336 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 337 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 338 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

2.00 Mewin Jaring 2.00 Moon Devil 3.00 Domine De Pro 3.00 Oatis Rose 4.00 Barton Scamp 4.30 BOOTS N ALL (map) 5.00 Samuel Widdup 5.30 Fortunes Flight

GOING: Good to Firm.

WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: Mr Seagull (3.50) won at Towerton on Saturday.

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2.20 ALL WOOL AXMINSTER 100 JUVENILE NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) £2,925 added 2m 2f

1. 321 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 322 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 323 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

2.50 MOORLAND AXMINSTER 100 MARES' ONLY SELLING HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS A) £2,925 added 2m 2f

1. 324 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 325 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 326 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

4.30 RESTORATION NOVICE HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS E) £4,075 added 2m 4f 110yds

1. 339 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 340 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 341 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

5.00 WORCESTER STANDARD OPEN NH FLAT RACE (CLASS H) (DIV 1) £1,500 added 2m

1. 342 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 343 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 344 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

3.00 BROMWYD NOVICE CHASE (CLASS D) £4,950 added 2m 7f 110yds

1. 345 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 346 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 347 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

3.30 EYEHAM HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS C) £4,850 added 3m

1. 348 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 349 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 350 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

4.00 COMMANDEUR AMATEUR RIDERS' HURDLE (CLASS E) £2,925 added 2m 2f

1. 351 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 352 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 353 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

HYPERION

2.10 Mister Banks 3.40 Rock Island Line
2.40 The Still Here 4.10 Express Gift
3.10 High Premium 4.40 Here Comes Harle

GOING: Soft.

WINNERS IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS: Mr Seagull (3.50) won at Towerton on Saturday.

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2.10 JIMMY CRAG MAIDEN AUCTION STAKES (CLASS E) QUALIFIER FOR 2-Y-O SERIES FINAL £4,200 added 2Y0 5f

1. 354 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 355 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 356 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

2.40 TALKING PAGES HANDICAP (CLASS F) £3,500 added 3Y0 of Penalty Value £2,542

1. 357 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 358 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 359 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

3.10 WESTCARS SAAB TRAINERS CHALLENGE LAUNCH CLAIMING STAKES (CLASS F) £3,300 added 1m 1f 30yds Penalty Value £2,626

1. 360 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 361 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 362 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

3.40 HAMILTON SELLING STAKES (CLASS G) £3,000 added 3Y0 1m 65yds Penalty Value £2,220

1. 363 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 364 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 365 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

4.10 YELLOW PAGES HANDICAP (CLASS D) £5,500 added 2m 3f 10yds Penalty Value £3,899

1. 366 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 367 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 368 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

4.40 LANARSHIRE HANDICAP (CLASS F) £3,500 added 1m 4f 37yds Penalty Value £2,808

1. 369 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 370 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 371 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

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Guide to the Flat

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Six-length Trick

Mister Trick's six-length success in the Sebel House Group Novices' Handicap Chase at Wetherby yesterday foiled a gamble on the runner-up, The Whole Hog, backed down from 14-1 down to 6-1.

The stewards inquired into the improvement in form shown by Mister Trick, 16-1, but accepted explanations from connections.

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Domine De Pro (Worcester 3.00)
NB: Scotch (Worcester 3.30)

RACING SERVICES

0891 261 +

HAMILTON 981
WORCESTER 982
EXETER 983

0891 261 970

2.00 Mewin Jaring 2.00 Moon Devil 3.00 Domine De Pro 3.00 Oatis Rose 4.00 Barton Scamp 4.30 BOOTS N ALL (map) 5.00 Samuel Widdup 5.30 Fortunes Flight

GOING: Good to Firm.

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2. 322 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 323 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

2.50 MOORLAND AXMINSTER 100 MARES' ONLY SELLING HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS A) £2,925 added 2m 2f

1. 324 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 325 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 326 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

4.30 RESTORATION NOVICE HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS E) £4,075 added 2m 4f 110yds

1. 339 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 340 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 341 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

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1. 342 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 343 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 344 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

3.00 BROMWYD NOVICE CHASE (CLASS D) £4,950 added 2m 7f 110yds

1. 345 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 346 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 347 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

3.30 EYEHAM HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS C) £4,850 added 3m

1. 348 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 349 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 350 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

4.00 COMMANDEUR AMATEUR RIDERS' HURDLE (CLASS E) £2,925 added 2m 2f

1. 351 GIVE AND TAKE (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
2. 352 THEODOR (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)
3. 353 SALWEEN (2) M P 11.4. Mr A. White (7)

Famous five on the 40th fairway

هكذا من الأصل



Famous five enter middle age
Europe's finest golfers
hit 40, page 26

sport

Grand ambition
Steve Brookshaw, trainer of
the National favourite, page 25

Gould's job jeopardised by race row

Football

RICHARD PETERS

Bobby Gould's position as manager of Wales has been thrown into further doubt by a racial disagreement with Nathan Blake, which the Bolton Wanderers forward said yesterday was the reason he did not play in last Saturday's World Cup qualifier against Belgium.

Blake said that Gould attempted to apologise to him last week, but he still refused even

a place on the substitutes' bench. Blake's absence was put down to "sickness and diarrhoea".

Gould allegedly made a remark to Blake in training before the Belgium defeat. That led to the player vowing never to play for his country again. Gould has strongly denied any offence was meant and said: "Perhaps Nathan Blake has finer feelings than other people. In future I will take that on board."

Following the alleged comment by the manager, a public slanging match ensued and af-

ter a long debate, during which Gould denied being a racist, the Cardiff-born striker then claimed he had been racially insulted by Gould once before during his days as a youth player.

Blake then told Gould he would not play for him again and was marked absent at the weekend when many expected him to be on the bench for the Belgian game, which ended in defeat and almost certainly meant Wales will not qualify for France '98.

Yesterday Blake said: "I still want to play for Wales but I

don't want to play for him. I have a total lack of respect for him. I went to see Bobby Gould and told him I did not want to be sub. I told him he could say what he liked, I didn't care."

Blake revealed he had been upset by Gould's alleged description of Dutch striker Pierre Van Hooijdonk during a post-match dressing-room discussion in the wake of Wales' 3-1 home defeat against the Netherlands in October, in which Van Hooijdonk scored twice. "I could not believe what I heard," said Blake.

who pulled out of the return match against the Netherlands in Eindhoven in November.

Blake was also upset by a training incident revolving around the different colours of training bibs. Neville Southall alerted Gould to Blake's concerns and Gould added: "Neville said, 'I think you need to have a word'. I accepted that and did."

"I had a meeting with all the players and it was brought up. I told all the players that if there were any comments nothing was ever meant."

Blake had a clear-the-air meeting with Gould last week without resolving their dispute. The player said he accepted "jokes and banter", but he told the *South Wales Echo*: "Racism is a thing of the past. We're in international football. I'm an established striker and I should not have to listen to it from my own people, especially a manager I play for."

Gould's management style has annoyed some other older players, with Ian Rush a notable absentee for almost a year from the squad. Gould said: "There

is a thin line and there is no way I have ever been involved with anything regarding this before in my career. I have nothing to hide, but it is a very delicate situation."

Gould added that the row would not affect Blake's international career while he was in charge.

Ken Tucker, chairman of the Football Association of Wales' Football Committee, rallied to Gould's defence. "While admitting I don't know the full facts, I do know Bobby Gould very well and would not have thought there was any question

of racism in his behaviour," he said. "He is just not that type of man and I am very surprised at this allegation."

Gordon Taylor, chief executive of the Professional Footballers' Association, said: "It is a disturbing to learn of such comments in the light of recent incidents which we have been trying to resolve. We do have a strong anti-racism campaign and this is something we are duty-bound to act upon. I will be in touch with both parties to see if we can be of any help."

Plenty of huff and puff for Lord of Uffington



Lord Gyllene, rated 9-1 for Saturday's Grand National by Hills and Coral, strides out yesterday near his Uffington stables in Shropshire

Photograph: Robert Hallam

Watson given caretaker's job with Everton

MARK BURTON

Dave Watson, the captain of an Everton side whose poor form led to the resignation of Joe Royle as manager, has been asked to take charge of the club's campaign to avoid relegation from the Premiership. He will be assisted in his role as caretaker player-manager by Royle's former No 2, Willie Donachie, who will stay on as coach.

Watson, 35, is celebrating his testimonial year at Everton this season and he could earn himself a glowing one as a potential manager once he retires by turning round the side's fortunes. "I think I can get the best out of the lads and I'm confident we'll stay up," he said. "I've got the respect from the players. That's something that's been built up over years and it's a major plus you've got to have that."

It was something that, apparently, Royle had lost. Watson, who was capped 12 times by England, has become a popular fixture at the heart of the Everton defence since his move from Norwich, playing 362 games for the club.

Joe Kinnear, who is rumoured to have attracted the attention of Celtic, Spurs and Everton, said yesterday he intends to remain as Wimbledon's manager. "I have got a roll-on contract and my ambition is to do 10 years. I have done seven and to reach that I will have to do three more," he said. "Until my chairman or directors tell me any different I am here. The way to do things in football is to go through your chairman."

Celtic have rejected claims that Tommy Burns their manager had resigned. It is under-

stood Burns will stay until the end of the season.

Fergus McCann, the club's chief executive, has refused to be drawn on whether Burns will be offered a new contract in the summer. "The club's progress and future football strategy and objectives will be reviewed and if any changes in personnel are to be made they will occur after the end of the season."

Burns added: "I have no intention of quitting. I would not see the logic in it and refuse to get involved in the hysteria that is being whipped up by people, who refuse to let the truth stand in the way of a sensational story."

West Bromwich Albion are being sued by their former manager, Alan Buckley, following his dismissal in January. Buckley has been unable to reach financial agreement with Albion over the remainder of his contract, which was due to run until 1999, and he is suing for unfair dismissal. He has applied to an industrial tribunal for his case to be heard.

Buckley will not comment on the claim, but John Barrowell, chairman of the League Managers' Association, said: "West Brom's solicitors are adamant they will not raise their offer. This leaves Alan Buckley with no alternative but to sue."

Hull City are facing a winding up order over a £200,000 debt to the Inland Revenue. The Third Division club will plead their case in London's High Court on 9 April. Christopher Needler, now a majority shareholder, is confident of securing an adjournment because of the impending sale of the club's Boothferry Park stadium. He is speaking to two supermarket chains who are potential buyers.

Evans surprised by his late Lions 'withdrawal'

Rugby Union

CHRIS HEWITT

Fran Cotton and the rest of the 1997 Lions management team sat down with the men in grey suits at the East India Club yesterday to discuss their squad for this summer's tour of South Africa, but thanks to the disintegration concerning the make-up of the party, they might have done better to hold the meeting in John Le Carré's front room.

The Lions' ratification session with the great and good of the Four Home Unions committee was overshadowed by the emergence of an apparent shock-horror story in Wales. Iwan Evans, already a double Lion, was confidently reported to have opted out of the trip - a move that would have denied the selectors an obvious candidate for the captaincy as well as leaving the wing positions even more exposed. All this was news to Evans. Regardless of the captaincy

issue - Martin Johnson, the Leicester and England lock, was hot favourite for the job yesterday despite a glaring lack of leadership experience - Evans pronounced himself fit and eager for one of the biggest challenges of his, or anyone's, career. Far from losing key members of their party, the Lions were hopeful of adding to it by appointing Dave Alred to the coaching team. Renowned in every corner of the rugby-playing world as the best kicking

technician in the business, the former Minnesota Viking from Bristol would be worth his weight in gold to a party seriously deficient in the crucial area of marksmanship. England chose to ignore his expertise for most of the recent Five Nations campaign and he was called in only on the eve of the final game in Wales. That was still enough time to inspire a world-class kicking performance from Mike Catt.

That policy cut little ice with Cotton and company, however, and the indications are that Alred could expect to be on the team plane when it leaves for Johannesburg on 17 May.

Other indications suggested the Lions would travel with a nap hand of former rugby league professionals. Four Welshmen who returned at the start of last season - Allan Bateman, Scott

Gibbs, David Young and Scott Quinnell - were racing certain for a place in the party and there was a strong bandwagon for Alan Tait, the Scottish centre, and John Bentley, the Newcastle winger, considered surplus to requirements by England. There was, though, a degree of concern over another wing contender, Simon Geoghegan of Bath. The Irishman pulled out of his club's important Courage League match at Sale tonight, claiming he was "not ready" for such a tough assignment so soon after recovering from surgery on both big toes - a message that was greeted with some discomfort by the champions, who had to recall England's Joo Sleightholme, a regular fall-guy this season, less than 24 hours after dropping him for Geoghegan. Selection issues were on the

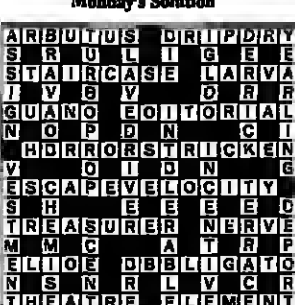
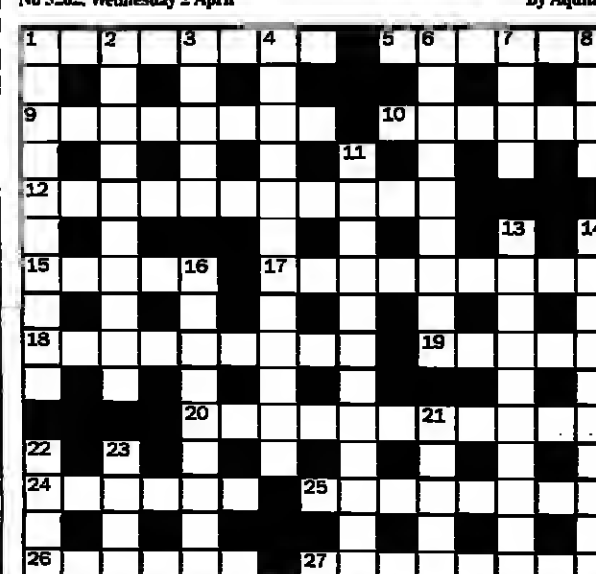
agenda at Leicester, too, in advance of tonight's top-of-the-table confrontation with Wasps at Welford Road - a match prematurely billed as the championship decider. John Wells, the flanker, and Stuart Potter, the centre, will be missing with rib and shoulder injuries respectively and that should mean calls for Dean Richards and Leon Lloyd. The Tigers have made a third change of their own accord, dropping John Liley and pulling brother Rob into the squad as a potential replacement. In Wales, Llanelli were drawn against Cardiff in the semi-final of the Swalec Cup - a fixture guaranteed to sell out Swansea's St Helen's ground. In the other tie, Swansea face at Ebbw Vale at the Arms Park. The matches will be played on 12 and 13 April.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No 3262, Wednesday 2 April

By Aquila

Monday's Solution



- ACROSS**
- Standard meeting-place for the arriviste (8)
 - Char from South Hornchurch? (6)
 - Gal pal, trembling, from deficiency disease (8)
 - Like Schenberg, a shot in the arm? (6)
 - Licentious period of leisure and affected speech (11)
 - Suggestions for city announced (5)
 - Parliamentary Commissioner for British Beef? (9)
 - College chart used on one who is 21? (8)
 - Dress-ring of Hollywood solitary (5)
 - In hatred of sex and violence, one must leave (11)
 - Foreign organ owned in barber-shop (6)
 - Black Friars abandoned New Style in Caribbean republic (8)
 - Stop a run and take a breather (6)
 - Spiky fish no longer present in Dart, it turns out (8)
- DOWN**
- Crisp apple crumble for office fixer? (5-5)
 - Beer-hall is alternative that can be enjoyed (10)
 - She inspired lines in the opera 'Tosca' (5)
 - Headstrong and powerless to take in logic (12)
 - Constantly fighting as in Russian-Afghan conflict? (3-3-3)
 - Old character getting rugby points (4)
 - Wine or pop? (4)
 - Unstable Bohemia virus acting up (12)
 - Seneca, for one, died in Armenia surprisingly (10)
 - Narrow and not ready-to-wear, say? (10)
 - 13's eminent leaders, fresh in epic tales (9)
 - Fabrication whilst recumbent (5)
 - Dyke-builder's declared tender (4)
 - I leave right after Borodin's prince (8)

Rusedski to miss Davis Cup Tennis

Greg Rusedski, Britain's No 2, has withdrawn from the Davis Cup match against Zimbabwe at Crystal Palace this weekend, because of continuing wrist trouble.

It means that Britain will go into the Euro/African Group One tie with a much weakened team as Tim Henman, the top-ranked Briton, has already dropped out following an operation on his elbow last week. The withdrawal of both his leading players has placed an added burden on the captain, David Lloyd, as he tries to take the team back into the World Group of the top 16 nations. Britain must beat Zimbabwe to advance to the World Group qualifying round from 19 to 21 September, the draw for which will be made later this year. Should Britain lose this weekend they will remain in Euro/African Group One.

Olazabal tries to ease Ballesteros' burden

Golf
ANDY FARRELL
reports from New Orleans

As much as Jose Maria Olazabal needed cheering up last year, when his foot injury prevented him from hitting a single ball in competition, the Spaniard is hoping to return the favour to his countryman Seve Ballesteros. "My intention is to do the best I can to make the Ryder Cup team," said Olazabal, whose victory in the Canaries two weeks ago capped a remarkable return to tournament golf. "Up to now, I cannot play more than two tournaments in a row, but my foot is improving all the time and I may be able to increase my schedule," Olazabal added. He has had to be picked for three of his four Ryder Cup appearances, but knows Ballesteros is hampered in his choices now that he has accepted he has lost his battle to get more than two wild cards. Both Spaniards are preparing for next week's Masters by playing in the Freeport McDermott Classic at English Turn, but in contrasting moods.

Olazabal is 41 under par for his three tournaments this year, while Ballesteros is 30 over in missing the cut in all his five events, after finishing 69th in the Order of Merit last season, easily his lowest position since 1974, the year he turned professional. "Winning in the Canaries did surprise me," Olazabal said. "I have never cried with tears of happiness like that on the golf course before. But I am still trying to be calm, to do the best I can and to enjoy it." Olazabal does not want to raise his expectations about the Masters. "I don't know what to expect at Augusta," he said. "Just to be there is going to be very special after watching it on television last year when I was in a bad way." Seve has a lot on his mind with being Ryder Cup captain. I am confident that he will play some good tournaments this year. As soon as the Ryder Cup is over he will start concentrating again. He is striking the ball very well when we played in practice recently. He just needs a few good rounds to give him some confidence."

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